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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this state-of-the-art monograph is to describe the nature of oral interpretation of literature and to suggest contributions which can be made through this channel to the study of literature in high school. A comprehensive treatment and a qualitative assessment of the published and unpublished material on the topic are attempted and the relevant research, curriculum trends, teaching materials, judgments of recognized experts in the field, and reports and findings from various national committees and commissions are reviewed. The approach used--the oral experience of teaching English, speech communication, theatre, related subjects--was selected for teachers seeking new techniques and methodologies to involve students both in the meaningful exploration of literature and in the development of effective communication skills. (RB)

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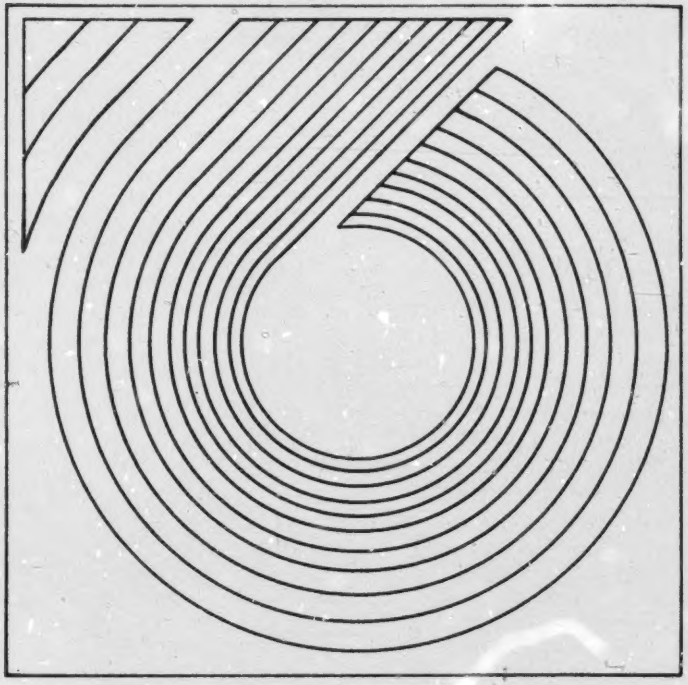

and the Teaching of Literature in Secondary Schools

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Foreword

As the body of information derived from educational research has expanded, so has the gap between research and classroom teaching. Recognizing this problem, the National Institute of Education (NIE) has charged ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) to go beyond its initial function of gathering, evaluating, indexing, and disseminating information to a significant new service: information analysis and synthesis. The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research and development are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different, useful context. Thus, NIE has directed the separate clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities state-of-the-art papers in subject areas of critical concern to contemporary education.

Each state-of-the-art paper focuses on a concrete educational need. The paper attempts a comprehensive treatment and qualitative assessment of the published and unpublished material on the topic. The author reviews relevant research, curriculum trends, teaching materials, the judgments of recognized experts in the field, reports and findings from various national committees and commissions. In his analysis he tries to answer the question "Where are we?"; sometimes finds order in apparently disparate approaches; often points in new directions. The knowledge contained in a state-of-the-art paper is a necessary foundation for reviewing existing curricula, planning new beginnings, and aiding the teacher in *now* situations. Publication of *Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of Literature in Secondary Schools* is the second of a sequence of reports to be prepared under the auspices of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and published by the Speech Communication Association. Each report will provide the reader with a practical, state-of-the-art introduction to a discrete topic of contemporary importance to students, teachers, administrators, and research specialists concerned with communication and the classroom.

Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of Literature in Secondary Schools is addressed to secondary school educators involved in the teaching of English, speech communication, theatre, and related subjects. Its central focus, instruction in *communication*, is of critical importance to educators in all subject areas at all levels. Its approach, the *oral* experience of literature, renders it particularly relevant to secondary school educators seeking new approaches and method-

ologies to involve students both in the meaningful exploration of literature and in the development of effective communication skills.

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Wallace Bacon

The greatest poverty is not to live
In a physical world. . . .

. . .

And out of what one sees and hears and out
Of what one feels, who could have thought to make
So many selves, so many sensuous worlds,
As if the air, the mid-day air, was swarming
With the metaphysical changes that occur,
Merely in living as and where we live.

—Wallace Stevens
from *Esthétique du Mal**

*Quoted from "Esthétique du Mal," which appeared in *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play* by Wallace Stevens, edited by Holly Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Introduction

Interpretation* has long occupied a significant place in undergraduate curricula in speech on the college and university level, and in the last twenty-five years has come to be a productive area of graduate study. On the graduate level, it is a subject studied almost entirely by those who wish to teach and who have strong interests in literature, performance, and creativity. It has clear natural ties with English studies; indeed, some of us who teach interpretation began as teachers of English, and on the graduate level, almost without exception, work in English and American literature is required of students who seek degrees in interpretation.

While occasionally course work in interpretation is required of students preparing to teach English on the secondary school level, and while from time to time one finds individual teachers who, out of their own particular interests, make extensive use of interpretation in high school courses in literature, it is still true that work in interpretation is minimal in secondary schools—and this at a time when the methods and goals of interpretation seem peculiarly fitted to serve the needs of a generation of students and teachers seeking something other than fact-oriented traditional courses in literature. The Dartmouth Conference in 1966[1] brought about an energetic concern with "dramatic" methods for the classroom, but much remains to be done, and *dramatic* is much too loose an adjective to cover the kinds of activity embraced by the study of interpretation.

In speech, as it is studied in the secondary schools, there is still comparatively little work in interpretation. More attention is given to dramatics and to communication in its various forms. When interpretation is included at all, it often becomes simply a unit in a longer course. It is included frequently in contest activities within the various states, but often in a form which does real violence to the goals toward which, for most teachers of interpretation, the subject is intended to move. It is in some respects unfortunate that the chasm which now seems often to separate English and speech as subject areas was ever permitted to develop. It is probably true that speech studies as a whole have gained from the divorce, but in the particular instance of interpretation both

*"Oral interpretation" is a frequent synonym. But for many teachers of interpretation, the word *oral* is redundant; the division of the Speech Communication Association devoted to the subject is known simply as the Interpretation Division, and the department of the School of Speech at Northwestern University of which the author is chairman is known simply as the Department of Interpretation. Throughout this monograph, the term to be used is "interpretation"; but the subject is viewed as an oral art, and the oral dimension is always intended.

English and speech have also suffered clear losses.

The present monograph is an attempt to describe the nature of interpretation and to suggest contributions which can be made, through such a channel, to the study of literature on the high school level. But it should be pointed out from the beginning that "the study of literature" is here seen within the context of the whole developing student; it is the relationship of literature to that student as a thinking and feeling human being which interpretation takes to be its object.

Interpretation Is...

Definitions of interpretation vary from one to another of the standard textbooks in the field, indicating differences in emphases among authorities. But there is little disagreement on the central concerns: text, reader, audience. The text is usually thought of as a work of literature, and usually as a written text, though "literature" may be seen in a very general sense and oral as well as written texts may be used. The heart of interpretation lies in its concern with the interaction between text and reader in the first instance and between reader and audience in the second instance. This interaction must be pursued from its first stage, usually in silent reading, to the last stage, in which it is demonstrated concretely in performance. Hence it is possible to define interpretation as *the experience of literature through the medium of performance, in which the medium itself is seen as a process of defining.*[2]

Interpretation is concerned with the bringing together, in the fullest experiential sense, of two *life forms:* the whole body of the student reader (and, later, of the audience member) and the whole body of the literary text. *Body* here, when used in reference to the student, is taken to mean not simply the physical body but the total human being—that feeling, sentient individual who ought always to be the central concern in humanistic studies. Used with reference to the literary text, *body* is a metaphor for the literary structure itself, that structure which takes the form of an *act* (or of an act subsuming acts) paralleling the acts of all life forms and consisting of stages identified as inception, acceleration, climax, and cadence or falling-off.[3] The literary text is a man-made form, but it duplicates in many ways the forms of nature. It has an outer form, or "skin," which separates it from its environment and makes it definable but which also serves as its point of contact with the environment. By first observing (reading) that outer form, the reader seeks to get inside the skin of the work to the inner form; he comes to know it in much the same way as he comes to know another human being—by observing and listening, by relating

what he learns to his total experience, by talking *about* it with others, by "talking" *with* it. The whole experience is a process of matching, and the point is to understand through the process of matching. The understanding which results is an understanding of *both* forms.

In the study of literature in any English class, there is a process of performance which is involved—silent readers as well as oral readers perform, though often at a minimal level. But in the class in interpretation, there is a particular result which makes the interpretative performance distinct from other kinds of performance: the interpreter attempts to make his matching complete—metaphorically, to *become* the work of literature, since when he performs he embodies the work; so far as possible, he seeks to be what he speaks. The whole process of study for him is to make that matching as full as possible within the limitations arising from his own bodily understanding. The definition of the two bodies demands an understanding of both and a sympathetic interaction between them.

Only after that congruence has been established between the body of the student reader and the body of the text can the further question of the audience be fully explored. While the audience is an integral part of the study of interpretation, it must always properly follow the uniquely personal relationship which exists between the single reader and the single text.

Students of late have been highly responsive to this view of interpretation. It is for many an exciting prospect to see the poem[4] as a life form—and to know that, like other life forms, it can be injured! At a recent college festival in interpretation, a black student performed a poem by Don L. Lee to an audience which he took (perhaps mistakenly) to be unfriendly. Since he felt that the audience was turning him off, he responded by doing the like to them. The whole life went out of his performance; what was left of the poem was simply its bone structure—in a sense too often intended in the study of literature, its "meaning." In a discussion of the performance later, the critic asked the student whether in fact he *really* cared about that poem by Don L. Lee. The student said that indeed he did, that it was "too good" for the audience.

"But if you really care about it," said the critic, "why did you hurt it that way?"

"What do you mean?"

"If you think of the poem as having a life, and if you respect that life, you are being completely irresponsible when you kill it off in performance as you did. It has nothing to do with the audience. They may like it or they may not—you hope that they will. But even if they don't, you have a responsibility to the life of the poem—and to Don L. Lee, if you will—and your job is to meet that responsibility."

He had never thought of it that way. It hadn't been, for him, "the two of us," the poem and himself matched; it had been himself only, and the audience. But what had been suggested to him, the notion of the poem as a thing alive,

responsive to him when he was responsive to it, excited him. It excites many a reader. It is good for readers; it is good for poems.

We shall return later to this view of interpretation as the process of exploration; indeed, seen this way, it is a kind of love relationship between reader and text in which a sense of the "otherness" of the other is a vital consideration. But meanwhile, it will be useful to look at certain studies which have been made of the extent to which interpretation is currently being used in schools.

The Monmouth Conference

In 1968 a group of teachers of English and interpretation gathered at Monmouth College, in Illinois, for a week-long conference devoted to the subject of oral interpretation.[5] Prior to the conference, in 1967, Thomas L. Fernandez distributed to 500 secondary school teachers a questionnaire which sought to discover whether in fact teachers were concerned with the ability to read aloud, whether they considered training in interpretation to be fruitful, and whether they felt such training ought to be required as part of their preparation as teachers. (College English teachers and college teachers of speech were also sent the questionnaire, but we are not concerned here with that aspect of the study.) Responses to the questionnaire were strongly positive, and secondary school teachers of English were particularly responsive to the view that course work in interpretation ought to be part of their teacher-preparation. Hence the Monmouth Conference devoted its time to discussing the aims and objectives of such work and to drawing up guidelines for a course for prospective teachers of English.[6] Nevertheless, in the Foreword to the published account of the conference, Robert Hogan wrote that of

> all the available approaches [to the teaching of literature in the secondary school], none is more ignored than oral interpretation. This is not to say that elementary teachers do not read stories and poems to primary children on rainy days, or that some high school classes do not occasionally or even regularly read *Macbeth* aloud. But reading aloud and bringing both insight and discipline to oral interpretation are vastly different matters.[7]

Clearly, he was right.

The Townsend Study

In the spring of 1971, Donna K. Townsend sent to fifty-one state supervisors of English a questionnaire designed "to ascertain the current status of oral interpretation as a method of literary study in secondary English classrooms throughout the country."[8] Ninety-two percent of the supervisors responded. The survey showed that while 47 percent of the states require a course in general speech as a part of the preparation of teachers, only 13 percent require a course in interpretation. Interestingly, 66 percent of the states have "a course in the oral interpretation of literature" on the secondary school level; such courses were offered twice as often in English as in speech departments. It should be made clear that these figures do *not* mean that large numbers of courses in interpretation are being taught. A single course in a single school within a state might permit a state supervisor to answer "yes" to the question, "Are there secondary schools in your state that offer a course in the oral interpretation of literature?" As a matter of fact, only two supervisors indicated that 50 to 75 percent of their schools offered such a course. Twenty-three supervisors (68 percent) indicated that less than 10 percent of their schools offered interpretation. Apparently more than half the supervisors responding (69 percent) felt that teachers read frequently to their classes; more than half (56 percent) also felt that students occasionally read aloud. Townsend's conclusions both from this survey and from her extensive review of pedagogical literature (dissertations, journal articles, books on the teaching of English) are that "little attention has been given to the application of oral interpretation as a method of literary study to the problem of teaching literature in secondary English programs,"[9] that "literature and oral activities are rarely brought together either in discussions in the periodical literature, the methods textbooks, the Project English curriculum materials, or actual classroom practice,"[10] that "with [few exceptions], writers and practitioners in English education evince no systematic knowledge—often no awareness at all—of the techniques of oral interpretation devised and utilized in speech departments; and . . . that there is no systematic attempt to relate speaking to literature. . . ."[11]

Townsend proceeds in three chapters of her study to provide a rationale for the use of interpretation in the teaching of literature in high schools, two examples of the use of interpretation in teaching prose fiction, and two examples of the use of interpretation in teaching poetry.

Elective Programs in English

In 1972 a publication of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills surveyed elective programs in English in the belief that "elective programs may well be one of the most significant developments in the English curricula of American high schools during the past decade."[12] Hillocks adds little to the knowledge of oral performance activities described by Townsend. Only about 19 percent of courses devoted to drama in elective programs emphasize oral reading even for that genre; Hillocks adds that "one might expect that, in courses concerned with the 'basic characteristics' of the genre, more stress would be placed on live drama, at least to the extent of studio readings."[13] Indeed, of the total number of courses surveyed (1990, in 70 elective programs), only 14 courses (0.7 percent of the total) were offered in interpretation, and these 14 courses were offered in only 13 of the 70 programs.[14] Indications are that courses in literature still concentrate heavily on the objectification of structure as the road to appreciation. Hillocks has this significant comment to make on that fact:

> The assumption that appreciation is dependent upon knowledge of the formal characteristics of the genres also requires careful examination. At one level, no doubt, appreciation *is* dependent upon such knowledge. If we define appreciation as pleasure obtained in the perception, analysis, and reconstruction of the means a writer uses to achieve his effects, then clearly appreciation is dependent upon knowledge of the "elements," though what those elements are and how to define them are questions open to continuing debate. However, there are certainly other levels of "appreciation" which precede the high critical faculty. A good many people can appreciate, at some level, Mozart's fortieth symphony without knowing much about its "elements," internal structure, or "genre." Similarly, we can enjoy Brueghel's "The Wedding Feast" without being able to objectify his design or use of color. Although such relatively technical knowledge might well enable us to appreciate the symphony or the painting at multiple levels, there is little doubt that our more immediate responses are *not* dependent upon knowledge of formal characteristics.
>
> Unfortunately, our notion of "appreciation" in the English curriculum has been singularly monolithic. Although elective programs have achieved a major breakthrough in establishing differentiated content and instruction, there is still a need to think in terms of different levels of appreciation. Students who have difficulty making the inferences which enable them to understand the implications of what happens in a literary work are

> unlikely to derive much pleasure from a knowledge of formal characteristics. Yet those same students may be perfectly capable of identifying with a character, an image, or a situation to the extent of being moved to fear, anger, pity, or happiness. That ability involves a very basic level of appreciation which is not in the least dependent upon knowledge of formal characteristics.[15]

Interpretation seems particularly suited to coping with appreciation on this basic *body* level. The thoroughly equipped interpreter will gain from a study of structure, since it clearly *is* true, as Hillocks observes, that at one–significant–level, appreciation is dependent upon such knowledge; but what the interpreter, like the work of literature itself, is after is not objectified knowledge but the *felt response* to the body of the work in its totality.

Comments from Students

During the summer of 1973, approximately one hundred high school juniors carefully selected from schools across the country attended the five-week sessions of the drama and interpretation divisions of the High School Institute at the School of Speech at Northwestern University. The students came from schools located in Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. All of these young people had a strong interest in speech activities; many of them had had experience not only in school plays but in forensic events (including interpretation) on the state level.

During a period devoted to discussing interpretation, 83 of these students responded to a set of questions put to them. To the question, "Is there any interpretation taught in classes in your high school?" only 18 students replied "No." (One student wrote, "Regretfully, no.") But the small number of negative responses is misleading. Of those who answered "Yes" to the question, clearly some were stretching their imaginations to include any kind of oral work connected with literature under the heading of "interpretation," as we shall see.

To the second question, "If you do have classwork in interpretation, is it part of the English or the speech curriculum?" 31 students replied "Both," 19 replied "English," and 15 replied "Speech." The single student in the drama and interpretation division who represented a school outside the United States (the American High School in Heidelberg, Germany) indicated that his school offered interpretation for a five- to seven-week unit in an advanced theater arts class. Most of these replies require further analysis, since in many schools the work in speech and English is clearly not separated, despite the students' valiant attempts, in replying to the question, to separate them. Often the student added

to his response the information, "but very little exists," or something similar. To the first question, whether there was any work in interpretation, students frequently replied in this fashion: "Well, sort of," "Scattered," "Individual teachers decide," "Just once in a while," "Sometimes a little . . . maybe with Shakespeare," "Yes, very little," "Vaguely," "Interp is scattered through classes, but I don't feel it's very organized," and so on. Indeed, only 12 schools represented in the survey seem to offer anything like an entire course devoted to interpretation, and even then it may be limited to the reading of plays. The usual pattern is a unit in either an English or a speech course.

More interesting were the responses to the question, "If your school does have work in interpretation, how is it handled?" One student replied, "Spurn [*sic*] of the moment performances not really prepared. Not very often perhaps two or three times a year." One student says of his English class, "If there are a few extra days we do poetry—but *rarely* performances." Another writes, ". . . as a 'side learning.' " A reply which underscores one of the observations of the Hillocks study—that classes in literature tend to emphasize objective form—says, "The stress in the class is upon form, etc. Any interpretation is scattered with no real emphasis." A reply indicating that "oral interpretation has a negative connotation in my H.S. . . . Most students have no idea what it is," described a ten-week elective in the subject: "Last year it was called Mighty Mouth."

One student who indicated that interpretation was part of the work in English wrote, "This is mainly reading silently and then discussing, but in some cases the teacher reads (which is a bad deal, because most of them don't know how and are too 'literary.' " Another student, responding enthusiastically to a change in the curriculum with the inclusion on the faculty of a new teacher with a doctorate in interpretation, wrote: "Starting this year certain English classes have integrated interpretation into the course in a general way spanning over the whole year. When we do poetry, we orally interpret it, when we read Shakespeare, we perform it aloud, when we read Beckett or Ionesco, we do the same." In only one other high school (both are in Illinois) did the emphasis upon interpretation seem so clear-cut and continuous.

Another student indicated that interpretation in his school was "merely reading poems and stories out loud which is the entire speech program" and added that there was no attempt to explore the literature; rather, students "just read it aloud and then forgot about it." Several students indicated that when performance was used it lacked positive enforcement: "We analyze literature but I would like to have oral readings by the student rather than just randomly reading out loud in class." "It would be interesting to analyze pieces of literature (as one might in a literature course) but from a performance standpoint. As it is, the way we go about interpretation for acting centers on a basic understanding for technical purposes rather than an intellectual approach to a work."

Students were asked whether their schools took part in interpretation contests, and part of the institute hour was taken up with a vigorous discussion

of such contests. There were strong feelings both for and against them. Some of the highly competitive students liked the contests, liked the chance to "win." Others clearly disapproved of contests, sometimes as a matter of principle (contests among performers place the emphasis upon winning rather than upon learning), sometimes because of the restrictions imposed upon contestants by local rules (interpreters frequently are forbidden to move, to memorize scripts, to gesture), sometimes because of the poor qualifications of judges for the events.

Quite apart from the results of this survey, it is apparent that contests are a hotly debated issue among people interested in interpretation. Generally speaking, the members of the Interpretation Division of the Speech Communication Association tend to shy away from contests and to support, instead, festivals or workshops where students perform and are offered criticism but are not rated, ranked, or awarded prizes. It is felt that such festivals and workshops are a more rewarding learning experience, and it is clear that many college and university teachers who have participated as critics in such affairs share that feeling. Contests frequently substitute abiding by the rules for a truly creative experience in reading, and they often tend to foster a false sense of "professionalism" in young interpreters. *Some* contest winners deserve the appellation, "Mighty Mouth." It is disheartening, on the other hand, to see a fine interpreter given a very low rating because he failed to look frequently enough at his manuscript or because he used gestures appropriate to the literature he was reading and thereby was judged to be "acting" rather than "interpreting." The history of interpretation contests in the United States has been plagued with arbitrary and ill-founded rules. Anyone who has been asked to fill out score cards for such events must often have felt that he was dreaming!

Finally, students were asked to indicate whether they would like to see interpretation offered at their schools, if it was not already offered, and, if it was already offered, what changes they would like to see in the way in which it was presented. All students but one indicated enthusiasm for such work. The replies underscore one of Hillocks' observations, repeated in more than one form, that students are not frequently enough engaged beyond the level of formal structure, beyond the level of "comprehension," and that students are treated more as receivers of messages than as composers. Here are samples of the replies:

> "I would like to see a course based entirely on Interp. As the Speech courses now stand they are a mixture of oration, debate, interp, and acting. It would be nice to be able to go more in depth in interp in our present Speech courses."
>
> "I would like *very much* to see a unit offered in english to help communication in our school for more than just english & speech . . . & even working a lot more in english classes with poetry 'actually having a

life of it's own,' because it would enrich our english department so much if language was taught to be really 'beautiful.' I also think that I've learned so much about how much fun language is and that there's so much you can do with it, and I'd like to see these ideas carried through to our school. We also need a lot more rejuvenation in our theater dept."

"Would like to see just more general interest & emphasis on interp ideas & more specialized classes dealing with interp."

"I would like to see more emphasis on short stories and plays instead of just poetry. In other words I would like to see more of expanded concepts in Interp than just the basics. More emphasis on performance of material."*

"I've never acted out concrete poetry. It was great, a real understanding achieved. But that would hardly work in a normal English High School class because most people would think that it wasn't 'kool'—(not me included)."

"I would also like an exploration of concrete poetry."

"More emphasis put on interpreting a *variety* of literature. Gestures are not generally accepted in our school, or use of the body beyond the hands. I would like to see that changed."**

"Interpretation of dramatic monologs and narratives. Before Cherubs [the nickname for students at the institute]. I never had any experience in poetry as far as structure, form, and interpretation goes. Interpretation of Shakespearean verse would be great in a high school course."

"This should definitely be offered on a structured basis . . . but poetry & prose, Chamber Theatre, etc., should be included."

"I would like to have it if there are teachers to teach it. . . . Contemporary works."

*Two students, however, asked for more poetry and less prose, and one of these asked for a course in the interpretation of Shakespeare!

**This same student indicated that in contest work in his school students were given one hour to prepare a new piece, "and I feel this does not give enough time in which to learn it completely." The author of this monograph finds himself in complete sympathy with the student. Clock time ought never to be a major consideration in the preparation of a performance. Such a stipulation places a premium on technical facility in the wrong sense, and may well lead to the production of "Mighty Mouths."

"Chamber Theatre, Reader's Theatre, oral reading of Shakespeare, concrete poetry. . . . There was in 1972-73 a Reader's Theatre production of 'The Crucible' for a special open house program, but this was abnormal."

"In speech we just speak extemporaneously. In English we talk about form & read poetry, but we don't talk about meaning. . . . I would like to discuss what the narrator and author is communicating & to whom he is communicating. I would like to learn how to perform the literature instead of just reading."

"Wider range of materials—we mostly stick to the tired and true—'My Last Dutchess,' etc."

"I would like to see less emphasis on 'prefabricated' interpretations of poetry, etc. When a teacher 'knows' exactly what something 'says,' 'means' (etc.) *he should not be teaching it.** Rather than aiding discovery he bores everybody and causes a great deal of resentment & bitterness. I would like to discover things for myself and hear my classmates' interpretations. 'Leading' questions and critics' opinions are worthless, or, more specifically, pointless and out of place in the classroom where interpretation is supposed to be being practiced. Outside opinions are much more meaningful when someone who is (truly) interested bothers to dig them out. (For the hell of it, as it were.) In general, we are grossly underestimated. . . . We do have interpretation in speech contests; it is grouped as poetry (*no* gestures), dramatic interpretation (*all* gestures), and prose (a *few* gestures)."

"Work with different forms such as concrete poetry, deeper studies of individual works, more work with various modern authors and poets. Learning to use the body as well as the voice—becoming the poem."

"I'd like to see a lot more. I've done things at this program that I've never really done before like *really* understand the character, play, and act it out but I know many people who don't enjoy acting and I don't think it would be fair to overstress 'Drama & Interpretation.' "

*This student's comment reminds one of Gertrude Stein's response to Mr. Hutchins' and Mr. Adler's wonderment over the range of questions which students in their class asked her during her visit, since students were not equally vocal to them. She replied that that was because they were *teachers* and knew the answers, whereas she did not. Students do not ask questions when they expect "prefabricated" responses, in effect.

"I would like a class dealing specifically in interpretation, we spent about a week on interp in my theatre class. More emphasis on prose."

"The teacher should show us the tools to interpret text and make it easier to work with. Also work with all kinds of text. Understanding of scansion and other technicalities. Also performance to understand work, incorporation of mime and varied works."

"A closer look at poetry. . . . Not studies in form, structure but *understanding* what's going on. Not knowing what something is on the outside. Understanding feeling from literature. Reacting to it, feeling not ripping apart just for the sake of exposing every little detail."

"I would like to see a more full course in interpretation. I have been subjected to many things that would never be touched upon in my school. For example, concrete poetry, I found delightful and very exciting. I must explain that for my school's size, which is about 400 students from 9-12, a more extensive interpretation course is improbable. It is unfortunate. I feel that interpretation is a very important part in anyone's education."

"More poems and less history on poets. Our poetry section is three-fourths background on poets and one-fourth poetry."

"A more intensive study. Ideally an elective interp class that would focus not only on the presentation but the selection and analysis of the author's motivation for writing or the particular manner in which the author's view would be most effectively presented. Also instead of lumping verse & prose together, an in depth look at each."

"I have never experienced a form of interp as I have here. I used to hate it because it always was the teacher saying—this is the way it is—there was always only one interpretation."

"I would like to see a more in depth study of interpretation, perhaps a full year course rather than just a three-week session. I would like interpretation to be treated seriously, as a skill useful to all like history, math, etc. The literature should be updated and current forms recognized & covered."

"I think perhaps in English there should be more *awareness* of interpretation. Most of the class is so concerned about 'What does the poem mean,' they forget about a whole new dimension of meaning brought about by our oral and aural interpretation of the poem."

"More variety in material in interp, such as short stories, prose fiction, poetry, instead of cuts from plays all the time."

"... interpretation course shouldn't make the body a separate entity from the verbal impression of the performer—show them as being inseparable."

"A wider range of interpretive material--to study more in depth a (for instance) story or poem in order to reach into it ... use more of the body rather than the voice alone, getting into character."

"... I would like to see more emphasis placed on Chamber and Reader's Theatre. ..."

While it must be remembered that all these students have a predisposition to enjoy performance (they were chosen for the institute because of their interests), one ought not discount their observations for that reason. Their remarks about current study of literature do not differ widely from the remarks of students in general, and most teachers of interpretation would probably testify that even the average student tends to come to life when he is introduced, sympathetically, to oral performance. When a poem in performance takes on life in its matching with the life of the performer, the study of poems (that is, of literature in general) becomes active, personal, experiential. In a very real way, the poem becomes the student's own, something which he has helped to create, rather than a "meaning" extrapolated and handed down by the teacher. We shall have more to say about this process later.

Many of the students responded with enthusiasm to concrete poetry, new to them. Concrete poems provide a useful and stimulating introduction to certain kinds of experiences of literature, with their highly imaginative and varied forms, often giving rise in performance to strongly creative interpretations. Many such poems call upon the performer to respond in the spirit of play, and they lend themselves easily to group performance so that students who are shy about solo work enter into them freely. Groups can create visual forms with their physical bodies, often paralleling the visual form of the poem. The poem "Silence" ("Silencio"), by Eugene Gomringer,[16] for example, consists of repetitions of the word *silence* (*silencio*) surrounding an open space, in this form:

The word *silence* seems loud in comparison with that blank central space which is "really silence." Students enjoy acting out such "statements," using their voices and bodies (using *themselves*) as literary materials.

Concrete poems clearly excite many students. Perhaps teachers ought to be using them on the elementary school level when students are first introduced to the sounds, shapes, rhythms, and feel of words as aspects of meaning.

Several of the students at the institute remarked on the freedom permitted in the interpretation of poems. Every teacher knows, of course, the difficulty in steering a middle course between handed-down interpretations and total anarchy. It isn't true that one meaning is necessarily as good as another. But neither is it true that there is only one way of responding to a thing, and it is often exciting to a class to share possibilities of interpretation. What, for example, is the meaning of that simple Japanese *haiku* which reads, in one translation:

Ancient pond
Frog leaps
Sound of water*

There are said to be many volumes of commentary in Japanese on this single *haiku*. Is it a simple photograph? Is it a statement about the circles of influence set up in life by a single individual's action (paralleling the waves sent out by the frog's leap into the pond), or a metaphor for any one of many other aspects of living? Oriental aesthetics likes the blurred edges, the manifold meanings of things; Western aesthetics tends to want the poet to "say what he means." It is often a healthy thing for the teacher to *listen* to students' responses, which he may find, all told, richer than his own response, though he may always wonder at what point he ought to draw the line. Not everything goes—but more goes than many imagine.

What one gets into at once is the matter of relationships between the meanings of literary works and the experiences of student performers. Each student gives something of himself in his reading—that goes without saying, probably—but each student must permit the poem to give itself, too. The matching of the two bodies is exactly that, a matching. The student ought not simply to overlay the poem with himself.

*The translation gives no adequate idea of visual form. In Japanese, the *haiku* consists of lines numbering 5, 7, and 5 syllables, respectively, reading, in *romaji*:

Furu' ike ya
Kawazu tobikomu
Mizu no oto

Statements from Teachers

Five teachers trained in interpretation have contributed information about work in their own schools and in their states. Phyllis Thorpe, teaching at Maplewood-Richmond Heights Senior High School in St. Louis, Missouri, found interpretation pretty much a mystery to her colleagues, or, where not a mystery, usually something of little value. Work in drama, as distinct from interpretation, is grouped within Missouri schools under communicative skills, though many teachers of interpretation object to viewing the art as concerning itself primarily with communication. Miss Thorpe writes:

> It seems much easier to convince people of the "usefulness" of a course in speech communication than of one in the oral performance of literature.
>
> I have taught at M-RH for two years. My first year I had sophomore and junior level English classes, and this past year I had speech and drama classes, both on beginning levels. I attempted to use interpretation in my English and drama classes, in varying ways and with varying degrees of success.
>
> A little background about M-RH—it's a small school, 800 students, middle-lower middle class economically. The district is composed of two suburbs just west of the city of St. Louis; thus, the school is, in many ways, more like a city school than a suburban one. My predecessor, the sole member of the speech and drama department, retired at the end of last year. At that time he had one class in each field, and the students were almost all seniors. A program, as such, was nonexistent. The drama class presented a play or a Readers Theatre production each year. Last year, the Readers Theatre show consisted of several poems, humorous essays, and short scenes rather loosely grouped around the theme of love. An explanation of Readers Theatre was printed on the program, but since the audience consisted mainly of the seniors and a few parents, most of the school remained unaware of this type of presentation. Music was used and, unfortunately (from an interpretation point of view), was deemed to be the best part of the show by several audience members.
>
> One of the good aspects of teaching at M-RH, though, is that an individual teacher is free to try almost anything in the classroom (provided no parent calls the school). So I tried to introduce aspects of interpretation and drama in the English classroom. I found that with a couple of my classes it

worked very well; with others, hardly at all. Students often resist the introduction of strange new activities in a class called English. They've had it before, and you're supposed to learn grammar in it—not stand up and make a fool of yourself before the class. I have talked with some other teachers who have found this to be true, also. But if you have a group of people sufficiently mature and "hammy" enough to risk it, I feel it can be fun and rewarding for them. I had one junior English class in which the students worked well together from the beginning. During the first month of school we found ourselves improvising a trial of Hester Prynne. (The English department at M-RH still has a traditional program, and *The Scarlet Letter* is required reading. Next year minicourses will replace the old program.) Several students became really excited at the idea of studying literature by reading it aloud and we talked a little about technique. A couple of times during the year I asked them to choose a poem, read it to us, and then discuss it or lead a discussion of it. One girl who hated to write and, consequently, was practically failing the course did an amazingly fine job of reading and was able to share many insights through her reading and discussion which she probably could never have stated on paper. This was particularly effective with dialect poems, which served as good examples of the importance of the spoken word in poetry. I think this approach helped students enjoy the study of poetry we did, even though many of them had acquired a fervent hatred of it by the time they became juniors. When we studied drama, I read scenes from *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Glass Menagerie*, just to show them that it could be done, and then I used improvisations and simple reading aloud to help them "get into" the plays.

The most successful use of interpretation in my English classes was the use of Chamber Theatre during our study of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. The students read the book, we discussed it, I explained some basic principles of Chambe. Theatre, and they went to work on the script. The scripts were created, for the most part, by a few of my more eager students, but the others were there to watch, and the most eager were not always the "best" or "brightest." We had long debates about where the narrator should be. Some students wanted him to hide backstage and scream! Finally, they allowed him center stage, but the hesitancy of some of the actors hindered the centrality of the narrator in some of the scenes. For some of the students, Gandalf and Bilbo and Gollum and Smaug really came alive. One student used great creativity in making his Gollum costume—his eyes were halves of egg-shaped panty hose containers! And the boy who played the dragon became one of the most active drama students this year.

Not all students, of course, became so involved with this approach. But for

many of them it was an excellent way to begin to see that literature is not just a lot of words but that it contains experiences to be shared. Some of the most enthusiastic students were those who were not fond of reading at all. The "dragon" boy said that *Huckleberry Finn* was the first book he'd read completely. I had had him play Huck disguised as the girl! One boy told me afterward that it was easier for him to picture what he read now.

I think that my reading scenes to them was profitable, too. Because it was new to them, a few wanted to laugh at first. I read the final scene of Marlowe's *Faustus* to one class and a girl wrote at the end of the year that she wanted to giggle at first, but she didn't dare, and she had actually gotten goosebumps!

Another advantage of the use of interpretation that year was that my students knew what point of view meant in prose fiction. A few students dropped in to say that their junior teacher was amazed that they understood it already!

In my speech classes this year, I did not use interpretation. I approached the class mainly as an experience-in-interpersonal-communications course.

My attitude toward the use of interpretation in the drama class was influenced greatly by my student teaching experience at New Trier West High School in Northfield, Illinois. The first and second years of their program include great emphasis on improvisation and actor training. Only after some basic objectives have been reached—concentration, the ability to create reality on stage, self-control, cooperation—are the students asked to begin work with a script. A study of interpretation requires an interest in the literature itself and the ability to use techniques that the beginning student often lacks. For some students, reading itself poses such problems that it might, if emphasized too soon in a drama class, stifle their chances of growing in other ways. So, I began my drama classes with theatre games, exercises in movement, voice, concentration, and building "group-ness." We worked with pantomime, various forms of improvised scenes, creating a character from the imagination, and improvising group stories. Then students presented both traditional and original group stories. But in them the narrator rarely had the kind of centrality that is vital to Chamber Theatre. After all this, and toward the end of the year, we began to work with scripts. I introduced this by having students choose one character from *Spoon River Anthology*. They explored the character, using analysis of the poem and some improvisation. The assignment was approached as an opportunity to create a character, not simply to read a poem. I was very happy with the results. The students presented the poem at least three

times—at first to a part of the class; then to the whole; for the final reading, they were to have created an introduction, which many of them dramatized. Since the class was a workshop during this time, I could work with students individually, and they seemed, at the end of this assignment, to realize the nature and importance of the introduction. Several presented excellent introductions, and many of the readings were well-done characterizations—not just reading from the book. So I think the exercises at the beginning of the course were a good preparation for the work in interpretation and enabled the students to understand interpretation as a mode of performance better, and in a shorter time, than if it had been introduced earlier.

In their final presentations, some students ventured further into the area of interpretation. Some presented Chamber Theatre scenes based on southern folk tales. Some presented poetry readings. One daring boy read LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman* and wanted to do the whole play. I tried to convince him to choose only a portion of it, but to no avail. When he presented it to the class, his performance was far from polished. But the class was interested, and his vocal delivery was clear enough to keep their attention. Afterwards, I used him to demonstrate the techniques of character placement and transition, which he was able to do quite easily when not hampered by the script (he had not allowed himself nearly enough time to rehearse the entirety). At least I will have some students in my second-year acting course next year who have been exposed to the technique.

Interest in the area of speech and drama is growing at my school. This past year I had two speech and three drama classes. The students enjoy having the opportunity to do something different—and it is, for many of them. Most saw their first play this year. So, to them, drama and interpretation are both mysteries as areas of study. I hope to use more work in interpretation, including group forms of interpretation, in my advanced course next year. I may also prepare some Chamber Theatre scripts to use for extra-curricular productions.

The state of Missouri has, of course, a competitive speech program. The 1971 manual includes in its rules for oral readings such statements as: "The good reader attempts to communicate an appreciation of the literature he is reading." and "This event is an oral reading, not an acting performance. Characterization and action are to be suggested rather than represented." These rules seem to me to be vague and do not represent the way I view interpretation. I participated in such events in Oklahoma and enjoyed them while feeling that they weren't really fair. Now they seem to

me to emphasize some aspects of technique (often poor technique) with little emphasis on, or consideration of, the literature itself. So I have not been involved with competitive speech, although it is alive and "well" in Missouri. A special organization exists for St. Louis area schools alone, and teachers recommend it by saying that their students enjoy it. . . .

Mrs. Tucker, by the way, explained to me that she used interpretation toward the beginning of her drama course as a way of presenting techniques of vocal interpretation—tone (using a comparison with music), emphasis (pause, inflection, relations of sounds to interpretation, etc.), comparisons, implied contrast, the concept of different meanings being given to the same words. I thought it interesting that interpretation to her seemed to mean the various techniques of voice. But I agree strongly that interpretation training is invaluable in doing any work with scripted literature.

I know of only one school in the St. Louis area which offers a course called "Interpretation," but there may be others of the larger schools which do so. Several of the people who have mentioned its use to me have indicated that interpretation of poetry was emphasized. Readers Theatre is also a part of some speech and drama courses. This is, I think, largely due to the presence and influence within the state of Leslie Irene Coger, who teaches at Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield.

I inquired earlier this year about the possibility of teaching an evening course in interpretation at a local junior college. I was told by a member of the drama department faculty that there was one such course in the regular curriculum and that an evening course, in order to be offered and enrolled in, probably would have to have a label including "communication." It seems that that is the magic word these days.

My attitudes toward values in interpretation are evident throughout this statement, but a couple of them deserve emphasis. The value of interpretation *as a way of studying literature* seems to me to be largely ignored. It is used infrequently in English classes, and even then there are problems with the attitudes and expectations of students, as I have described. In drama classes, it seems to be used often as a tool for teaching techniques rather than as an art form that emphasizes the re-creation of the experience in the literature. Indeed, this may be a lofty value, and one not achievable by every high school student. But my experience has shown me that some exposure to interpretation can help students gain the ability to experience as they read, and for them that is very important.

Another value I believe is sometimes ignored is the value of . . . the relationship which takes place between the interpreter and the literary work. In a way, I may be restating my last paragraph, but many people (among them, English teachers with whom I have talked) seem to assume that the purpose of studying literature through performance is the performance itself, or the communication of the work to the audience. I believe that the study can be of great value to the student, as I have said above, in his own appreciation and enjoyment of the literature, apart from his ability to communicate this to the audience. I feel that the process of putting themselves into the characters and the world of a work of literature in a physical way, not merely a mental one, can be invaluable for students.

Some false values I have observed in the teaching of interpretation include the concept of suggesting a character or a movement* and the notion, often evident in drama classes, that a student can perform one scene from a play without knowing well the entirety from which it was taken. I have used *The Man* series in my drama classes because the selections (for the most part) are entire in themselves. If students want to do scenes from other plays, I ask them to read the entire play.

One more word about co- and extra-curricular interpretation. I used some of my students' readings as part of a parents' night program. I think that the most successful parts of the programs presented by the drama classes this year were the parts which grew directly out of class work—the readings, stories, and improvisations. These are, I think, more valuable than readings which are prepared to qualify for contests whose rules indicate a view of interpretation with which I disagree.

The relationship between speech and English with regard to interpretation is a complicated one for me. My department is composed of individuals who value their right to teach what they want to teach. They seem to respect my right to use drama and interpretation in my classroom, but they would resist being told that they must teach in the same way. Nor have they had the training to do so. I have noticed that a couple of them (there are only nine) have included some poetry reading assignments, one has asked me for ideas, and one has entered into a few rather philosophical discussions with me about the nature of interpretation and its relationship to literary study.

*Miss Thorpe is speaking of the notion, frequently expressed, that the interpreter "suggests" character or action but does not characterize or move. Clearly she opposes this notion, as do I.

One difficulty in this area is, as I have said, the attitudes of students who have been trained to expect a certain sort of curriculum in English classes. This can be changed, and perhaps will be in my school with the introduction of minicourses and some philosophical changes in the school as requirements change. But I think that my school is not unique in some of these problems, even though others may be ahead in starting to solve them.

One question to consider is how important are the *techniques* of acting and interpretation taught in an English class? How much of the time in the class can be devoted to these considerations apart from composition and grammar? Perhaps most of our high school students would benefit more from some sort of actor and performance training than from a repetition of the same grammar rules presented in the seventh grade.

It seems to me that training in acting and the experiential approach to literature offered in interpretation may be invaluable in the training of the student simply because it increases his awareness and experience as a person. There has been much emphasis on the affective domain, as opposed to or in conjunction with the cognitive, in education of late. We seem largely to have ignored the vital area of emotional response, as if people were capable of thinking apart from feeling. I think that this may be one difficulty in the English-interpretation relationship. One of the beauties of interpretation for me is that it demands total commitment and involvement of the whole person in the literary work. My discussions with some English teachers have indicated to me that they are suspicious of this as a somewhat "mystical" phenomenon. They seem comfortable only when looking at the literary work from without and are a little upset at the idea of "entering into" the work itself.*

The emphasis by many English teachers on the "author's intent" might pose another problem with interpretation theory. For some English teachers, the communication act between the author and the reader is of central importance. Interpretation seems to focus instead on the relationship between the work itself and the reader. This view ascribes to the work a life of its own—and this may not be accepted by some teachers of English.

Another difficulty which can be a problem in any class, and which may be worsening in our schools, is that of asking students to be a *learning*

*Many English teachers have witnessed little interpretation—and have experienced it even less.

audience, not simply a group of spectators seeking entertainment. For students who have been brought up on television and movies, who demand to be stimulated when their attention is sought, it is sometimes difficult to understand that their classmates will perform, not primarily to entertain them, but so that together they can learn something. I think that this is a value that interpretation can teach, but it is a difficult one for many students to accept.

I believe that there can be many advantages in a close relationship between English and interpretation in the classroom, but first there must be attitude changes on the part of many teachers and students. If these can be achieved, and the importance of the spoken word and the experience of literature given its full value, some exciting things can happen. "Slow" children who have never been excited about reading a book can, through seeing Chamber Theatre, watch literature come alive. Students can create their own Chamber Theatre show and realize what point of view is all about. By empathizing with the characters in a play or the speaker of a poem, the student can grow in the knowledge of literature and of himself.

A second statement comes from Natalie Weber, who teaches at Homestead High School in Sunnyvale, California. Miss Weber is a teacher with long experience on the secondary school level. She, too, is thoroughly aware of contemporary views of interpretation and is herself a very proficient performer. She writes as follows:

My school district, which includes six schools of about 2200 students each (Fremont Union High School District), initiated an English elective program about five years ago to replace the traditional freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. Now all students must take eight semesters of English, but only three of those semester courses offered are specifically required.* That is, each student must take at his ability level one course in speech. The other five classes may be selected from a lengthy list of possibilities. One of these is a semester class entitled Oral Interpretation of Literature. I set up the course of study for the district and was given a considerable amount of released time to compile the necessary materials. The course is now offered at all six of our schools and there are several sections at some of them. This, of course, varies depending upon the registration each year.

*Miss Thorpe indicated in a part of her statement not included in this monograph that the Missouri system also has recently introduced a program which will permit the student to elect eleven of the twenty units required for graduation.

In our oral interpretation course we attempt to give the students an overview of the field by studying various types of literature and performance. In the foundation course, Basic Oral Communication, the students are given an introduction to oral interpretation so they have some idea of what the more advanced course includes. We have an extensive co-curricular speech program which includes competition in the traditional memorized declamation events, but the course attempts to get away from this to more of the sort of thing that is studied at the collegiate level. Oral interpretation and oral communication at all the schools is taught by an individual with either a speech major or minor. All those teaching interpretation have had a considerable amount of study in that area.

Because all of this course work comes under the heading of English at our school as well as at others, it is difficult to estimate interpretation throughout the state system. Other districts have in recent years adopted similar elective programs and have courses in oral poetry, dramatic literature, and so on, which are essentially oral interpretation courses but are not in separate speech or drama departments. Very few schools have courses entitled Oral Interpretation, but many teachers who are members of the California High School Speech Association (about 600 member schools) tell me that they teach oral interpretation under some other title. Most of those member schools that enter competitive forensics teach some type of interpretation but that would necessarily be of the type that conforms to the National Forensic League's rules for dramatic and humorous interpretation.

In recent years the state association has added competition in an event called "Programmed Reading," thematic performances utilizing three or more selections from different literary works which are presented with an introduction and transitions. This event utilizes a manuscript and is the only event in which memorization is not specifically demanded. Indeed, just this year we received permission from the National Forensic League to give this event equal status in their point system. Many consider this a milestone in updating the whole concept of competitive interpretation for high school students. Programmed reading has become increasingly popular as a competitive event and seems to us in the field of oral interpretation to be a far more creative and demanding event than the solo acting performances of the dramatic and humorous interpretation events. Also we have rid ourselves of oratorical interpretation. Gone forever, I hope, are renditions of "Give me liberty or give me death" and "Four score and seven years ago. . . ."

In my own district there is a very happy relationship between speech and

English. Most of the teachers are delighted that the lip service given reading, writing, speaking, and listening has now become a reality and are relieved that the token oral book report has been replaced by a sound curriculum taught by trained individuals. In my department of twenty-five people, three of us are speech majors, three are drama majors, and four others have speech minors. This seems to be rather typical of our district. As a result, Oral Interpretation as a course enjoys the same status as World Masterpieces, British Literature, or The Novel. I might add that Speech and Debate is considered a very difficult course and only the above average students are encouraged to take it. We simply don't nave an elective in speech which serves as a dumping ground.

At the state level, the scene is not as good. Currently (as of June 1, 1973) a piece of legislation known as the Ryan Act states that in the future the list of acceptable teaching majors for credentialing purposes will be extremely limited. Journalism, drama, speech, and reading are all to be grouped under the single heading of English. Each candidate is to be given a comprehensive examination to assess his competency in this general area. Of course, the high school and college speech people are up in arms, so hopefully some modifications will be made.

Janet Bauer and Bill Waack of Evanston Township High School (Evanston, Illinois) responded to the author's inquiry by following the form of his letter. The headings for the various parts of their outline are as stated in that letter.

I. Status of oral interpretation at ETHS
   A. Courses offered
      1. Nine weeks of oral interpretation are taught as part of the Freshman Speech Arts, one of the arts electives required of all freshmen. This section has been offered for seven years.
      2. One advanced course in oral interpretation is offered as an elective to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. A student may elect the course for one semester or for a full year. This course has been offered for ten years.
   B. Status of these courses: very healthy
      1. Oral interpretation has proved to be one of the favorite sections of Freshman Speech Arts; in fact, a great preponderance of students electing the advanced course are sophomores who have taken the freshman course.
      2. The advanced course has grown from one section with ten students to three sections totalling 75 students.

3. The courses seem to appeal to the above-average student scholastically.
4. Students are requesting additional courses. (Some of these needs are met by an independent study course, Self-Directed Projects in Speech Arts.)

II. Oral interpretation throughout the state system as we see it
   A. Oral interpretation courses as a separate discipline are exceptions rather than the rule.
   B. Oral interpretation seems to be taught as part of a speech fundamentals course or as part of English.
   C. There is some tendency in English departments to begin to use oral interpretation assignments in English classes but, for the most part, as motivating devices rather than as the means of teaching the art.
   D. Oral interpretation events in contest work seem to be the major means by which any techniques of oral interpretation are taught.
   E. There are, to our knowledge, no certification requirements for the teaching of oral interpretation in the public schools.

III. Relationships between curricular and extra-curricular work in interpretation
   A. Interpretation events in contest work provide the spine of the relationship between curricular and extra-curricular work.
   B. At ETHS, we use the term *co*-curricular rather than *extra*-curricular, since the present philosophy of the school deems speech activities as extensions of the curriculum. Most students involved in interpretation events in contests come from the oral interpretation classroom.
   C. ETHS has no separate class for training contest entrants.
   D. ETHS has a number of in-school activities:
      1. Send performers to elementary and middle schools (for example, story readers have made several trips to present programs to kindergarten-through-five students in the elementary schools).
      2. Performances from oral interpretation classes and performances from acting classes are presented to combined groups when common time schedule permits.
      3. There are occasional showcases but no "major" productions as such.

IV. Values we see as not properly realized in the teaching of the subject, values which seem to be false in current teaching

A. We are not quite sure how to answer this particular topic, but two items might bear further investigation:

1. A settling of the old "acting-versus-interpretation" conflict particularly with reference to critiquing in the contest situation.
2. The placing of a value on oral interpretation as "art."

B. Below are listed the general objectives which we attempt to fulfill in the teaching of oral interpretation at ETHS. They may be of some value to this study.

The student who completes the sequence of study in oral interpretation should

1. Recognize literature as a humanizing experience.
2. Demonstrate an awareness of the relationship of his own experience to literature.
3. Demonstrate personal growth in terms of his self-awareness (i.e., his understanding, his sensitivity, and his responses and reactions).
4. Through his participation in the interpretative process, demonstrate a greater understanding and sensitivity to human behavior, and thus be able to function more effectively within his own environment and in the human community.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of the difference between reading literature aloud and interpreting literature for an audience, and realize that interpretation is a unique medium as well as an integral part of the arts.
6. Demonstrate an aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional response to literature both as a performer and as a listener, and, through the utilization of his imaginative and creative processes, be able to formulate evaluative criteria by which to express a quality judgment.
7. Demonstrate, through the proficient use of voice and physicalization, skills and techniques that are essential in communicating the meaning of the literature to an audience and in eliciting the appropriate and desired response from that audience.
8. Recognize analysis as a basic component of the interpretative process, discriminate among the various analytical approaches, and utilize these approaches as an integral part of his performance.

9. Acquire sufficient skill in oral interpretation to assure enjoyment of the art beyond the high school years.

V. Relationships between speech and English in the teaching of interpretation
   A. At ETHS, the English and Speech Arts Departments are separate, but the two departments work amicably together.
   B. At this point, the two departments go their separate ways curricularly.
   C. The two departments have investigated the possibility of offering oral interpretation as an English credit for one of the one-quarter minicourses offered at the senior level.
   D. Oral interpretation classes do perform for English classes.
   E. In essence, the oral interpretation classes are performance-oriented; oral interpretation taught in the English classes is generally used as a motivating force.

It is worth taking a moment to comment, at this point, on item IV.A in the outline provided by Miss Bauer and Mr. Waack. Under A.1, they refer to the problem already suggested by Miss Thorpe's comment about suggestion in performance. Many rules for state contests throughout the country seem, to most teachers of interpretation who are trained in the art, clearly outmoded with respect to their distinctions between acting and interpretation. Perhaps the issue may be demonstrated by recounting something which occurred at a festival at Emerson College in Boston a few years ago, when the author was in attendance as guest critic and reader.

In one session devoted to prose fiction, a young woman read a short story. It was clear that she had talent as a performer, that she understood relationships among the elements of the story. But in performing both the narrator and characters within the story, she provided so little characterization that she stifled the audience's response and seemed, indeed, not to enjoy the story very much herself. The sense of constriction, of the wrong kind of tensions in the performer, produced a quality of tensiveness quite wrong for the experience within the piece of fiction itself. Furthermore, she seemed strangely tied to the manuscript which she was using—"strangely" because she did not seem to lack familiarity with the text.

When the teacher who was acting as critic during that particular session suggested—quite properly, I thought—that the performer ought to characterize, ought to make clear in her whole body response the qualities involved in both characters and narrator, and began to suggest how she might do this within the economies of the solo interpreter, the student burst into tears. Distressed by this response to his comments, the critic started to explain further, whereupon the student sobbed, "I agree with you. I agree with you. I wanted to read that way,

but when I try to characterize in contests, the judges tell me that I am acting and that I cannot do that." And so she was trying despite her own better judgment to live up to contest rules by defeating what ought to be the whole purpose of the interpretation performance, creating the life qualities of the work of literature being read.

Doubtless, restrictive state rules sprang up long ago in reaction to falsely "dramatic" readings, to "Mighty Mouth" performances, to displays of "technique" divorced from the materials being performed. But any contemporary teacher of interpretation surely knows that the difference between acting and interpretation lies elsewhere. Hollow displays are *neither* acting *nor* interpretation. Memorization does not constitute the difference, however strongly some teachers feel about wanting the presence of the script in performance. However useful the word *suggestion* has been in some contexts–and clearly it *has* been useful–it ought not to serve as a barrier to the full realization of literary vitality. An interpreter *does* things as he performs, though with a strict economy which arises from the fact that he is a single person performing and that he cannot do alone what *can* be done by a performing *group*. The interpreter who deals with characters must characterize, must give his body over to the *tensive* qualities in the body of the character he is performing, whether that be in drama or prose or poetry. That does not mean that he engages broadly in all the acts described in the literature. He does not need to fall down on the ground when a character in a story falls down on the ground–if he does, he will doubtless have trouble returning to other characters or to the narrator. But to say that he does *nothing* is to miss the whole point. The word *suggestion*, properly employed, is trying to get at that minimal activity, that tensive state, which will keep both reader and audience alive to the feeling within the text. Suggestion used thus must include the use of certain kinds and degrees of movement and gesture. Several years ago, the author was asked to judge a national interpretation contest in the Philippines. After he had agreed, with some misgivings, to do so, he was given a set of rules, one of which stated: "The reader may use only his voice and his eyes. Any movement will be held against him." He suggested that the sponsors find another judge, whereupon he was told that he didn't really need to follow that old rule. Nevertheless, the rule still existed and, presumably, there were judges who required that it be followed–as if any human being *could*, even if he wanted to, use only his voice and his eyes. It is such curious views of the human organism as this that Miss Thorpe, Miss Bauer, and Mr. Waack are presumably questioning.

The concluding statement is from Roland Rude, a teacher at New Trier East High School in Winnetka, Illinois.* It is a very personal statement by a teacher who holds his doctorate in interpretation.

*The five Cherubs from New Trier East indicated knowledge of the program which Dr. Rude describes. Interestingly enough, the five Cherubs from New Trier West, a related

The Speech-Drama Department at New Trier East offers the in-coming freshman a four-year program in the performing arts. Oral Interpretation 318 is one course in the program and is offered in the student's junior year. As a prerequisite, the student must have taken Theatre Workshop 118, Acting Workshop 218, and be recommended for the course by his previous instructor. Oral Interpretation 318 gives 6 hours credit toward graduation, meets three days a week for forty minutes, and is designated in the curriculum guide as a *minor* course.

Emphasis in the course is placed upon oral performance. To one devoted to the premise that interpretation should concentrate on literary criticism, this emphasis on oral performance substantially "waters down" the course content and results in a far from satisfactory teaching experience. But I truly wonder if, at the high school level, any other emphasis can be made. Even without the "new" educational philosophies and the peculiarities of individual school administrations toward curriculum it seems to me that the high school milieu forces upon the teacher of interpretation an emphasis on oral performance. If a high school has two or three courses in interpretaion, or a department of interpretation, then, to be sure, it would be "absurd to center a whole curriculum in interpretation on the problem of performance," but most high schools have one course if, indeed, they have any. Also, these "solo" courses in interpretation most often form a part of the *performing* arts curriculum. And the prevailing attitude at New Trier East clearly is one of departmentalism: leave the interpretation of literature to the English department and the performance of it to the drama department.

Administration attitudes toward the "arts" at New Trier East create added road-blocks to the development of an interpretation curriculum. All interpretation and drama courses are considered "minor" subjects—enrichment courses—with no academic status. I quote from the *Program of Studies Handbook:* "With few exceptions, a passing grade in a minor subject gives one credit per period per week. A minor subject meets either fewer than five days a week or fewer than eighteen weeks a semester or does not require substantial homework. Minors are not computed in a student's class rank." Recently a committee on curriculum revision

school, generally indicated that interpretation did not exist in their school and that the institute had been a real eye-opener for them with respect to literature. The one student who said that there *was* work in interpretation at New Trier West said that it was "very scattered" and that he'd "like to see a lot more." It was this student who was reported above as saying that "I've done things at this program that I've never really done before like *really* understand the character, play, and act it out. . . ."

recommended that all minor subjects be offered on a strictly pass/fail basis. As long as the arts carry the stigma of a "second class" subject, there will be little opportunity for curriculum advancement in these areas. Needless to say, the administration's attitude toward minor courses is reflected in the attitudes of many of the students taking these courses—even, I'm distressed to say, of students who profess a desire to become actors and actresses. More and more I find the "drama student" unprepared with his assignment and willing to take a failing or lower grade for late performance. Much of this slothful attitude, I admit, is the result of an overall apathy that has very definitely invaded the student body in the past four or five years, but it is further encouraged by the school's naive attitude toward "non-academic" subjects.

Financial considerations are more and more playing a role in the creation and alteration of educational philosophy. At both New Trier East and West, class size is a non-negotiable item. Each class must have at least 20 students or that class is cancelled. This enrollment demand poses a great threat to many of the elective courses. This past semester there were 23 students enrolled in interpretation—just three over the minimum required. Now 20 in an interpretation course is fine, and if the administration would permit us to close the class at that number we would have no complaint, but they will not give us that permission. During the 1971-72 academic year, we had 32 in the interpretation course. The students easily became bored having to sit for weeks listening to others perform. Also, with so much time needed for performance, the interpretation portion of the courses suffered accordingly. Interpretation courses stand in jeopardy between two extremes: too few students to hold a class and too many to make the course serve its function.

Financial problems at the lower grade levels are having a direct effect upon enrollment in the high school. Many enrichment courses in the grade schools have been completely eliminated because monies were needed for "academic" subjects. No courses in theatre are now taught in the New Trier Township grade schools. In past years, most grade schools had a dramatic program. The loss of this feeder system has markedly reduced the enrollment in our beginning drama classes and, subsequently, in all of our classes.

An administrative decision concerning students' unassigned time poses perhaps the greatest threat of all to the future of the minor subjects at New Trier East. It has been decided that students may go home when they have finished their classes. All students must take four major subjects; as a result of the administration decision on unassigned time, students are

taking their major subjects as early in the day as possible so they can go home early. This means that any minor subject offered early in the school day will likely be by-passed in favor of a major one. The only alternative seems to be to place the minor subject in the afternoon and hope for an enrollment from devoted students large enough to have a class. Changing student attitudes presage, I fear, the failure of this alternative.

Interpretation throughout the State System as I See It

Not until I started inquiring did I become aware of how few schools have courses in interpretation. I believe there are only three schools in this area, Evanston, Arlington Heights, and New Trier East, that have a course in interpretation. If this is true for this affluent area, I would imagine there would be even fewer offerings in other parts of the state. A number of teachers that I talked with said that interpretation formed one unit in a general speech, drama, or debate course. At New Trier we also include a unit in interpretation in our general speech course. I knew that the Forensic League had a number of interpretation events—poetry and drama "readings"—and when I asked how these were prepared, all responded that they were done extra-curricularly.

Relationships between Curricular and Extra-Curricular Work in Interpretation

Our students in interpretation are in great demand to perform for English and social studies classes. I make it a policy to inform the English teachers of students in interpretation that they have potential performers in their class. All the work done for these classes is prepared outside of class, although I usually work with the student, giving what suggestions I can to better the performance. Five or six interested students have proposed a plan for setting up a repertory theatre group for the express purpose of performing for English classes. This group would meet after school to prepare the material to be performed. The participants would also take it upon themselves to poll the English faculty to see what *types* of performances they would like and what materials would satisfy the teacher's need. For the past 17 years we have presented a major interpretation production. These shows are very popular both with actors and audience. Most of the outstanding actors and actresses are eager to try out for these productions. There is a general feeling among these students that the performance skills demanded of them in this type of production are the most challenging and rewarding in their high school acting experience. The programs, whether they be Chamber Theatre, Reader's

Theatre, or individual readings, are geared to the English department curriculum. Many English teachers require their classes to come to these performances. ITV is designing a series of thirty-minute programs with the cooperation of the English department called "Great Moments in Literature." These programs will consist of dramatizations of selected literary works used in the department. It has been suggested that members of the interpretation course and selected faculty members be used in this series.

Relationship between Speech and English in the Teaching of Interpretation

Many more students would enjoy English in high school if they were given the opportunity to "experience" the literature that they study. Interpretation adds that dimension. The humanistic bomb-shell that has exploded on high school teaching has done a considerable amount of harm to the student's critical capabilities. It seems to me that a strong sophist attitude is being generated in the English classes: literature is studied so that the student can find a personal pattern for living, and the critical and aesthetic values are ignored because "What is good is what I think is good, and what is bad is what I think is bad." Interpretation at New Trier is, in a small way, seeking to restore a balance between life and critical values in the student's study of literature. Mary-Lou [Mrs. Rude, who also has had graduate work in interpretation] had an interesting experience in a below-average English class that clearly illustrates the value of the interpretation approach to literature. Both Mary-Lou and I believe that the below-average student in English does not feel comfortable when asked to use his thinking or intuitive function and is much more at home when asked to use his feeling and especially his sensation function. English must, therefore, appeal to these functions. So, rather than lecturing to the students or having them go home and study large sections of a work in order to discuss them in class the next day—techniques which at the beginning failed miserably—Mary-Lou began a performance approach to the material: she read to them and had them read; they cast the play they were studying in class and acted it out; they did the same with a short story; she brought in records and films. At once the students began to take an interest in what they were studying. The attitudinal changes were remarkable. Now, too, they wanted to talk about the material. At first this talk simply reflected their personal feelings about the literature, but this was the opening that Mary-Lou needed to judiciously impart to them the fact that feelings are rational and that there are collective feelings that form the basis of critical evaluation.

English and Speech: The Arts and Communication

At several points in the discussion above, reference has been made either directly or indirectly to an issue which often seems to divide teachers of English and speech at the present time. The word *communication* has become an "in" word (which means, often, that it is "out" for others), and much time has been devoted to the question of whether the arts, and specifically the arts of literature and the interpretation of literature, are or are not to be viewed as communication. The former Speech Association of America is now the Speech Communication Association–for many of us a very awkward name–and interpretation is one of its divisions. Nevertheless, many teachers of interpretation are reluctant to see themselves as being first and foremost teachers of a communicative process.

The question is complex. Clearly the arts *do* communicate; they "say something" to others, in their interaction with readers and viewers and listeners–and, nowadays, touchers. Furthermore, there are writers who clearly see themselves as message-and-audience oriented, communication centered. But there is nevertheless a point in a remark of Barbara Hernnstein Smith:

> When we read a poem or hear it read to us, we are confronted by the performance of an act of speech, not the act itself. . . . the claim is not the same as that made upon us by one who addresses us directly, his discourse directly shaped by the pressures of an immediate or "historical" occasion. Both the poet, in composing the poem, and we, in responding to it, are aware of this distinction, and it controls both the form of his discourse and the nature of our response.[17]

While Smith does not say so, it is possible to feel that a breaking down of this distinction is one of the things which results in the failure of so many occasional pieces, written to order by writers for specific occasions, where the process of communication actually interferes with the poetic process.

At any rate, her distinction between speech and "the representation of an act of speech"[18] is useful to us. The "literary artifact must create the illusion of being a historical utterance precisely to the extent that a play must create the illusion of being a historical action, which is to say, *not completely*. . . ."[19] Literature communicates, but it is not to be seen simply as a communication; the interpreter, in performing this representation of the speech act, communicates, but he is not to be seen simply as a communicator. While the interpreter shares with the speaker, in performance, the presence of an audience, he also shares with the poet an act of utterance which has only an indirect relationship

with the audience, no matter how "open" (as opposed to "closed")[20] that relationship between work and audience may be.

The interpreter is in this respect closely allied with the actor. Many actors will bear witness to the terror they may feel when, on occasion, they are asked to speak to audiences, school assemblies, club meetings, and so on. Some actors, indeed, refuse to accept speaking engagements because of their uneasiness as speakers. The direct confrontation with an audience puts them in a very different relationship with that audience—one which is not a part of their usual art. Interpreters, too, may often feel less secure in introductory material preceding a reading than in the reading itself. One, the introduction, involves "speaking to"; the other, the reading, involves the matching of reader and text as its fundamental concern. It goes without saying that that matching will be ineffective, before an audience, if it cannot be heard and understood—that is, the reader shares with the speaker certain aspects of the communicative process.

The distinction may seem to be needlessly subtle, but it is often what is behind the kind of separation of functions which puts interpretation in a speech class rather than an English class, and restricts the study of literature to an English class rather than an interpretation class. The separation has been in many ways both misguided and harmful.

In the first place, if interpretation is the study of literature through the medium of oral performance, the literary text and the matching of that text with the performer is the center of its concern. *This is not to deny the significance of performance.* Broadly speaking, the teacher of interpretation is concerned with appreciation, in the fullest sense of that word. He wants what the poem itself wants—felt response to the work. (I must repeat again that the word *poem* here is being used generally to include all fictive works, whether in poetry or prose.) The performance is the student's way of showing, of demonstrating, his felt response. To put it another way, the performance communicates felt response to an utterance which is a representation, in Smith's words, of a speech act. One primary difference between the communicative act as ordinarily defined and the act of interpretation (or the act of a poem) is that the latter may be highly effective and valuable when there is no audience but the performer himself.

We dwell so long on this matter because it is important to make clear the natural bond which ought to unite teachers of interpretation and English. The study of literature in the English classroom ought not, surely, to be simply a study of objective form, of *detachable* meaning, of general themes. It ought to enable the student to *feel,* in the fullest and best sense of that word—which involves rational processes. It is perhaps a sad fact that we need to teach students to have such responses to literature; literature was read and felt before there were classes in English. Nevertheless, it is very clear that many students nowadays *do* need help—or at least encouragement and stimulation and loving sharing—in the process.

The study of performance in the interpretation classroom ought not, surely, to be simply a study of techniques of performance seen superficially as embracing diction, volume, articulation, projection, vocal quality, independent of the work being performed. Prejudices die slowly; there are still English teachers who see interpretation as being simply a vocal skill, and there are teachers of interpretation who look with disdain on the English teacher's concern with extra-literary matters–poets' biographies, historical facts, influences, definitions of objective form. But there are many teachers of interpretation today who do not share these old disdains, and hopefully there are coming to the fore English teachers who do not share the ancient suspicions concerning "speech." Together, in active cooperation, they ought to be able to help students open the door to that vast storehouse of experience which literature represents. That experience needs to be lived in the process of matching, in the process of interpretation.

Reading Aloud vs. Interpretation

Many English classrooms–I remember some of them well–and, I fear, not infrequently interpretation classrooms from time to time are concerned with oral reading in a desultory way. Students may be asked to take part in a scene in *Macbeth* and will proceed to give a "cold" reading, stumbling along, not clearly comprehending the language, having no feeling for scene or character or thought or emotion, simply reading aloud. This is not interpretation, nor is such an act of reading aloud likely to result in any clear benefit to either class or play–even when some of the students enjoy "taking a part," which is to say doing something other than sitting still and listening. Doubtless this is the kind of oral performance which the Cherubs referred to in the comments quoted earlier: "just randomly reading out loud in class," "merely reading poems and stories out loud," "spurn of the moment performances" (a delicious word, *spurn!*), "side learning." Such readings fill up the time, and perhaps the teacher feels that he is bowing to dramatistic methods, but they represent little of real value to either student or literature.

Hook's Six Approaches

One of the well-known textbooks devoted to the teaching of secondary school English, *The Teaching of High School English* by J. N. Hook,[21] divides methods

for teaching literature into six basic approaches: the historical, the socio-psychological, the emotive, the didactic, the paraphrastic, the analytical. Hook writes that "these six approaches may not seem, on the surface, to be all-inclusive, but a little pondering will show either that other so-called approaches are subdivisions of these six or that they are not truly approaches at all."[22] It may be argued that the interpretative approach, while it overlaps some of Hook's approaches, deserves to be listed separately. It cannot be parceled out in terms of his six approaches; parceling it out would be like saying that a painting is pigment, canvas, and a frame. The elements, listed separately, do not constitute the approach.

Part of our view of interpretation Hook includes under the socio-psychological approach, where he quotes Louise Rosenblatt's excellent book, *Literature as Exploration:*

> Through literature the individual may develop the habit of sensing the subtle interactions of temperament upon temperament; he may come to understand the needs and aspirations of others; and he may thus make more successful adjustments in his daily relations with them.[23]

Like Louise Rosenblatt, who is clearly aware of the values of performance (even silent readers perform, in her view), Hook speaks approvingly of reading aloud—"That the teacher ought to read with effectiveness goes without saying"[24]—but he never devotes either systematic or sustained attention to it. It is possible to feel that he would include it under emotive approaches, but the term *emotive* too often connotes appreciation in a far too reductive way: "I like this poem." "This poem makes me feel sad." Emotive approaches sometimes lead to simple identification of reader with text, for example, the boy student identifies with the baseball player who hits a home run but has no feeling for Macbeth! In succeeding sections of this monograph, we shall argue more fully for interpretation as a seventh approach to the teaching of literature.[25]

Interpretation and "Critical Reading"

It is sometimes, out of misplaced enthusiasm, argued that interpretation naturally improves the ability to read silently. But interpretation may slow down the reading process—probably does, with fictive literature. Speed reading, the ability to read and extract meaning with alacrity, has an aim quite different from that of interpretation, which is not in its most fundamental sense concerned with extractable meaning. Nevertheless, there is a way in which interpretation

can indeed serve the development of what George D. Spache calls "critical reading,"[26] though he is not concerned with the literature per se. He says,

> In our opinion, the primary reason for instruction in critical reading is personal—to enable the reader to profit from books without the limiting effects of his own personal biases and prejudices. . . . [The critical reader] should be taught to perceive emotional reactions, motives and inner drives of story characters.[27]

Spache refers to "the active, intellectual and emotional interaction of author and reader which is the essence of critical reading."[28] Critical reading, as he describes it, is reading which enables the reader to bypass prejudgments, pre-reading prejudices, in the act of reading. Literature provides good training for the reasons cited, for with literature and with all critical reading, intense personal feelings get in the way. One reason why, in discussing Hook's six approaches, we have suggested some skepticism with respect to an emotive approach is that such an approach tends to permit and to indulge personal feelings. Spache is to the point:

> The average reader seeks confirmation of his own prejudices in the materials he chooses to read. These human tendencies to read feeling tone into facts in keeping with our own beliefs, to be susceptible to the manipulations of the propagandist, and to fail to recognize the author's hidden purposes make training in critical reading imperative.[29]

In the reading of literature—and in the interpretation of literature—students must be taught *not* to pour their own lives whole into the texts they read. Such interpreters simply give us themselves over and over again. They grow fat on literature because they treat it as candy, feeding simply their own appetites. The true student of literature and the true interpreter is a critical reader. He interacts with the text; while he must make use of his own experience in responding, he also observes the experience within the text. In portraying Macbeth, Bill Smith will not turn Macbeth into himself but will try to turn himself into Macbeth. Obviously, there will be something of both in the performance—no interpreter can or should totally disavow himself. As I have put it elsewhere, drawing upon phenomenological studies,[30] the *body-fact* of his Macbeth will be himself, but the *body-act* will be Macbeth. If his audience sees and hears no one but Bill Smith, his performance of Macbeth will be a failure. But no one in the audience will be completely unaware that, in even the most successful performance, Macbeth is in body-fact Bill Smith. The matching of the two forms is the whole point, but in the process of matching, the interpreter (like Spache's critical reader) must not allow his own biases and prejudices to hamper the body of the literary text.[31]

Literature and Behavior: Interpretation

In a volume of essays devoted to teaching English on the secondary school level in England, Arthur Wise has argued for the role of speech education. "Communication is one of the important uses of speech," he writes, "but it is not the only one. Educationally speaking, communication might not even be the most important function of speech."[32] He refers to Russian research which points to the role of speech in the "normal development of mental processes." Swedish research, too,

> has shown that, even in silent reading, use is made of the muscular movements of speech. We can see this if we ask a young child the question: "When you go out of the school and turn to the left, what is the name of the fourth street on the right?" The processes the child goes through in his attempt to provide the answer will be accompanied by visible movements of speech. If we point out these visible movements to him and insist on their inhibition, we shall find that we have effectively inhibited those processes that were represented by the speech movements.
>
> So we can say that what we are dealing with is a total form of human behaviour, involving complex mental and movement processes. Sometimes this behaviour is used for communication purposes; perhaps more frequently it is used for purposes that have nothing to do with communication. The development of this form of behaviour is essential for the development of mental processes.[33]

Similarly, the teacher of interpretation views the speech component of behavior as an aid to the development of the student's ability to read literature. In the act of interpretation, language must be related to the whole life of the body. Tensions which exist between characters, rhythms which inhere in the stress patterns of words, dispositions toward action (attitudes) in novels and plays and poems, variations in tempo, the backward glance of memories and reflections, the sense of solitariness in soliloquy, the directness of direct discourse, the covert quality of much indirect discourse, the whole range of feelings expressed in literature—all these are related directly and significantly to the body of the performer. The kinetic and kinesthetic activities of the body make one vividly aware, as silent reading often does not, of the life of language and of literature. The performer must always be cognizant of the fact that literature is *process, becoming.* Too often the *discussion* of literature treats the text as if it were completed, closed, finished. Closure is where literature ends up, but it is not where literature lives. The teacher may say, "What happened in the

story?" but the student must know that what literature asks is, "What is happening in this story?" And the oral performer gives us, from moment to moment, ideally in all the variety which the text demands, the acts of the text. Hence the act of interpretation becomes a channel for the education of the senses in a particularly full and rich way.

This is not, of course, to divorce discussion and interpretation, or to suggest that they have nothing sharable. Often the interpreter, after an initial silent reading of a story or a play, for example, must ask himself, "What happened in the story?" The matter of where a story ends up has a great deal to do with how it moves toward that closure. The bleakness and isolation of Macbeth's last days has everything to do with the brightness and promise of his beginning—but it would be fatal to *Macbeth* if the performer were to give us, at the end of the play, a character who could not possibly have come out of that initial soldier of Duncan's. Shakespeare, to be sure, has laid out the path, but the performer must follow that path bodily—and again, we must emphasize that "body" is the whole organism here, not simply arms and legs and torso and "head" without thought and feeling. His body act must parallel the act of the play.

That is one reason why teachers of interpretation frequently find themselves disturbed by the reading required of some high school students. The study of Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example (and this is not a made-up example, but one from life), may yield something to a very bright high school senior, but I remember vividly talking with such a girl who was certain that she understood Joyce very well but who showed in her whole behavior that, whatever was in her "mind," her body spoke vividly of her lack of comprehension. Doubtless there are senses in which one's reach ought to exceed one's grasp—but it is futile, usually, to ask the eighteen-year-old body to cope significantly with King Lear. The more one reads about the range of materials in elective programs in English, the more one wonders what, if anything, is being left to the mature reader. How much of the literature which is being "read" is being *felt* as contrasted with "simply understood"?* Poems, clearly, want the whole response. Poets don't write primarily to be talked about.

Teachers nowadays frequently make use of films and recordings in the teaching of literature to help in the bringing about of *felt response*. And, indeed, much is to be said for such materials. But there is a sense in which the student is a passive member of such a listening community. Perhaps that is why some teachers encourage students to make their own films and recordings. At any rate, the more active the "passive" listener can be trained to become, the better for the art form for which he is an audience. The interpreter, in his performance, must be active. Just "reading aloud" will not do. Much "reading aloud" is simply a less effective silent reading.[34]

*That is, in the sense of reductive paraphrase.

Perhaps, as a conclusion to this part of our discussion, one cannot do better than quote Townsend's views with respect to the relationship between interpretation and literary study:

> Literary discourse—as the definition of the term has been developed in this chapter—can best be approached for study in the literature curriculum of secondary schools through the process of oral interpretation for the following reasons: (1) the work of literature must be analyzed by the student not in order that analysis may be an end in itself but that analysis may be a means of arriving at a valid interpretation of the work, (2) the oral interpretation allows the student to focus on the aesthetic, literary actualization of the text rather than on the analysis of the text, an act which is scientific rather than aesthetic or literary in nature, (3) the oral interpretation of the literary work allows the student to give concrete actualization to many features of the work which may otherwise only be talked *about*, especially features of the dramatic speaker's attitude and features of the sound structure of the work, (4) the oral interpretation allows the simultaneous actualization of features of the text, features which in analysis can only be considered serially, and (5) the oral interpretation of literature allows the student to discover through his experience of performing the text how all the aspects work together to form an aesthetic object.[35]

Two observations: Townsend does not minimize the value of the scientific act of analysis; she simply recognizes that the scientific act and the literary experience are different. Secondly, her emphasis on "the dramatic speaker's attitude and features of the sound structure of the work" (item 3 in her list of values) seems to me to emphasize too narrowly a view drawn from Don Geiger's *The Dramatic Impulse in Modern Poetics*,[36] upon which she bases part of her method of analysis for interpretation. It is possible to feel that the emphasis upon the dramatic, however widely to be found in modern poetics, is more often than not based upon discussions of lyric poetry. It is not always particularly helpful to think of the utterance of a literary text as being necessarily the speech act of an individual. Smith's distinctions between speech and poetry are helpful here.[37] This is not to deny, of course, that poems are written by poets.

Interpretation in the Classroom

This is not the place to attempt to write a mini-text for interpretation, but it is possible to give some idea of the relationship between the two kinds of study we have been comparing by showing how approaches to each might differ in the

classroom. The sample analyses provided by Townsend in her dissertation[38] are more extended, and she covers short fiction as well as poetry. It would be useful to have an analysis of a play, as well, but the question of length makes that difficult.[39] First we shall consider only a poem.

The Funerall

John Donne

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
Nor question much
That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme;
The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
For 'tis my outward Soule,
Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
Will leave this to controule,
And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewie thread my braine lets fall
Through every part,
Can tye those parts, and make mee one of all;
These haires which upward grew, and strength and art
Have from a better braine,
Can better do'it; Except she meant that I
By this should know my pain,
As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd to die.

What ere she meant by'it, bury it with me,
For since I am
Loves martyr, it might breed idolatrie,
If into others hands these Reliques came;
As 'twas humility
To'afford to it all that a Soule can doe,
So, 'tis some bravery,
That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.

Any reading, whether silent or oral, will be concerned with certain kinds of questions. Who is speaking? Of what is he or she speaking? What is he saying about the subject of his speaking? Critical study may ask, too, about the stanza pattern—meter, line length, rhyme. But the oral realization of the poem comes immediately face to face with problems of tensiveness*: What is the body tone

*Tensiveness here always refers to the general state of stretch, the elastic state of the poem's "musculature" as one element tugs and pulls and weighs against another. This is the quality of "life" in the body of the poem.

of the speaker? Is he threatening? Warning? Is he full of tension? Relaxed? Is he speaking directly to someone, or is this soliloquy? Is there an audience of any kind? Does the reader, in his performance, read directly to those listening to him, or is his relationship with them indirect? What is the effect, in terms of tensiveness, of the very short second line in stanza one between the two longer, and rhyming, first and third lines? How would tensive relations differ if line four were also a short line, so that the poem would alternate regularly between long and short lines? (one answer is that line four, with its greater length as Donne gives it, provides the effect of medial closure in the poem, so that the fifth line seems to "begin" again, but while this can be said of the fourth line in the first and third stanzas, it cannot be said of the middle stanza. Why?) Notice that the first and second stanzas are both single sentences. What is the effect of such length on tensive qualities in the stanzas? Notice that in stanza three, modern punctuation might well place a period after the fourth line. The cadence, the move toward closure, begins here, and it would not serve the purpose of this last stanza if the reader were to treat the whole stanza as a single movement.

The rhyme scheme is to be taken into account in performance, too. Since lines one and three rhyme, for example, as do lines two and four, it will not do to treat the first line or the second line as simple run-on lines, whether or not there is terminal punctuation. Hence the long first line, with terminal pause or "hold," followed by the short second line, with terminal pause or "hold," which is followed in the first two stanzas by a third line with strong terminal punctuation, creates a fluctuating rhythm which is a vital part of the poem's movement. (Notice that in stanza three, the effect is varied because the punctuation at the end of the third line is very weak. The *time* by which the stanzas move is not identical, though the general stanza pattern remains unchanged. Notice, too, the effect created by varying the regularity in the metrical flow of the lines. While the foot pattern is essentially iambic, notice the following, in the first stanza:

1. In line 1, the fourth foot ("me, do") is broken in the middle by the comma, which affects temporality.
2. In line 4, the comma after the second foot ("-tery,") affects temporality.
3. In line 6, the first foot is inverted, and the initial trochee creates an effect of syncopation, which the body must *feel* as syncopation. In the same line, "heaven" is apparently a single syllable, as it is more often than not in the period. If the reader treats it as dissyllabic, he will be introducing an effect not intended by the poem.
4. In line 7, the second foot ("this to") is inverted.
5. In line 8, the second foot is probably a spondee, so that we get three

heavy stresses in a row, "keep these limbes." In the same line, the commas separating the appositive ("her Provinces") strongly affect the movement of the line. Note, too, that the final word in the line, "dissolution," is five rather than four syllables, as almost always in Donne. While a modern reader often does not wish to draw "-tion" out into a full iambic, with a strong stress on the final syllable, it would be *wrong*, in this poem, to treat the word as having only four syllables, truncating the stanza.

One could go through the other two stanzas pointing to similar elements affecting the *feel* of the poem as it speaks, but there are still other elements to be examined in the initial stanza:

6. Notice the liquids in the third line: the *l*, the *r*'s which, in the first half of the line, move so easily through the vowels in "subtile wreath of haire." But note what happens with the phrase "which crowns," where the juncture between the two words creates a very different effect, though the *r*'s continue. Then, with "-rowns my arme," we return to the smoother flow of the first half of the line. The sound pattern points strikingly to the significance of "which crowns," intensifying the image of the bracelet of hair about the arm. (Students will be interested, too, in the special *feel* of the word *subtile* in its seventeenth-century sense.)

7. In lines 7 and 8, notice the effect of the initial alliteration in "controule" and "keep," which (as opposed to the line separation and the rhyme) *pairs* the lines and hence anticipates the syntactic pairing of "limbes" and "Provinces" to follow. The repetition of the vowel sound in "keep" and "these" augments this pairing.

All of these matters are *performance* matters, affecting attitude and tonality. Sounds, rhythms, rhymes are aspects of meaning, not separable from it in the body of the poem. The long lines of Donne's poem, with their regular iambic movement, are made to alternate (though not with absolute regularity) with shorter lines which cause the poem to hesitate briefly, to seem to caution—which is, of course, what the speaker is "saying" to anyone who is listening. The point is that the outer form of the poem supports the inner form; the visible and audible form supports the poem's "intent." Donne helps the reader to feel what the poem wants to be felt.

Notice, too, the lack of certainty in the speaker himself. In stanza one, he seems sure of the positive significance of the symbol, the wreath of hair. In stanza two, he introduces another note, beginning, "Except she meant that I—," where he wonders what the woman whose hair it is ("she") may have intended

after all. But in stanza three, in the poem's cadence or close, he turns suddenly, startlingly even, to a very different situation and tone. Whereas he has up to now been addressing "us" (the listeners) and speaking of the woman in the third person ("she"), he now abruptly turns from us and addresses the woman directly ("you"). Furthermore, there is a moving contrast, a strong tensiveness, which arises from the oppositions of *humility* and *bravery*, *save* and *bury*, *me* and *you*. It is not at all an easy question for the performer to decide how *much* irony is involved in the poem's closure. How loving is the speaker? How much accusation is there in the sentence? Is the speaker bitter? Sad? Only lonely? Triumphant? To answer the question, one must ask whether the speaker *means* what he has said in stanzas one and two. If one believes that the wreath of hair is indeed a second soul, a viceroy governing the bodily provinces left behind when the inner soul has gone to heaven with the death of the man, then it is difficult to feel that the tone is in any way bitter or ironic as the poem begins. Nor does the reference to the woman's "better brain" suggest irony. It is only when the reference to the prisoner comes at the close of stanza two that one first begins to wonder, *with* the speaker, about the woman's intent. Even so, the opening of the third stanza ("What ere she meant by'it") suggests that he accepts the situation. Hence the irony at the close of the third stanza, though it is indeed poignantly expressed, does not seem bitter or angry—while it is strong, it is gentle at the same time. The bodily state (while one may admit that it will probably vary in interesting ways from one performance to the next) is of the greatest importance to the effect of the poem as it is interpreted. The interpreter is confronted, in the most direct and moving way, with the question: How does this man feel as he speaks about death, the woman whom he has loved, love itself? It is also clear that the religious imagery in which the feelings are clothed and the extended conceit which acts as the controlling image *distance* the poem in a particularly effective way. The interpreter must *embody* the mind which speaks, not talk about it. The embodiment involves the whole skeletal frame of the poem (the "outer form," including all the elements of the stanza pattern which we have discussed) and the flesh and spirit which clothe it. How does the poem feel as it speaks? (It goes without saying that that question includes knowing *what* the poem speaks.) W. H. Auden has said that one of the two questions which interest him in a poem is "What kind of guy inhabits this poem?" The other question, relating to the poem's verbal construction, is "How does it work?" The interpreter must, in his performance, give us the answers to both these questions in the most direct way possible. He thus becomes the poem.

The oral interpreter is not simply one who empathizes. He works cooperatively and sympathetically with the poem; adds, by necessity, his own particular body responses; creates, in this matching of two life forms, a form which is (except in recorded form) unrepeatable, unique. In the most significant way, the interpreter experiences the poem. It is perhaps not too much to add that the poem also experiences him, but he must take great care not to subject

the poem to himself. Always he must move toward the poem, adopting an attitude of humility toward it, seeking to give himself to it in performance. It is by thus extending oneself that one grows. Education is a leading out. But all roads ultimately bring one back to oneself.

Beginning teachers—or even experienced teachers who are just beginning to use an interpretative approach—are frequently uncertain of themselves. Teachers sometimes *fear*, as students frequently *believe*, there are "performance techniques" which, once mastered, will permit a reader to "perform" anything at all. This is a view which looks upon techniques as a skill—like typing. Acquire a splendid voice, learn how to breathe "properly," polish your personality, learn how to gesture, don an attractive costume, and you are ready for anything written. But this is a wrong-headed view of technique. Many people who have never been near a course in voice and diction, for example, are fine readers. The human body in its normal daily activities is a storehouse of gestures to be drawn upon in reading. Opening oneself to a poem can in itself effect the kinds of change in personal stance needed to perform the poem.

This is not to say that voice, breathing, gesture, and so on, are irrelevant considerations. Far from it. But one need not *begin* there, and the beginning teacher—certainly the beginning student—probably *ought not* begin there. Any teacher who, in his own silent reading, finds himself bodily responsive to a poem can learn to read that poem aloud with at least a moderate degree of effectiveness without separate concentration on any of the "techniques" seen narrowly. Students who are looking for the "key" in *external* performance techniques are not going to get very far; indeed, they may become the worst readers of all, "sounding good" but not "meaning" much.

Reading a Poem

To a serious teacher who once asked, in a conference devoted to the oral study of literature, "What do I do first when I have a student read a poem?" I replied that one might simply have the student read, first of all. (The student must be made as comfortable with that situation as possible; some students are frightened at the prospect, and too much tension in the classroom will spoil the whole process.) Then, listening sympathetically to the reading, the teacher will himself have a response to the way the poem "felt" and can talk with the student about it. What about the images in the poem? The teacher should take the time to ask the student to repeat lines with images which need greater attention. It is not simply a matter of how the *student* feels—it's a matter of how the *poem* feels about its images. If the image is visual, the teacher should try to

find out what the student sees in his own inner eye. If the image is auditory, he should have the student say it to suggest what he hears. (For example, if the poem speaks of a tolling bell, he should find out what *kind* of bell seems to the student appropriate to the poem. How does the tolling of a big bell differ, in one's speaking of it, from the tinkling of a little bell? How does the size and weight of a bell affect tempo? Pitch? But it is important to remember that what the student should be concerned with is the quality of the *bell.*) The point is that the student must learn at the outset that there is a tensive relationship between the aliveness of the text and his own aliveness. What he brings to bear, within his own body (and that includes mind, of course), actually funds the experience of the poem. But of course he must try *not* to bring body responses which are inhibitory to the life of the poem. The teacher should not be afraid, in discussing the felt response to the poem, to ask the student to try lines again, taking more time, or less time, perhaps, on a given word or phrase. What is the relationship between tempo and feeling? How does the word *cool* in the phrase "cool customer" differ from the same word in "cool breeze"? Or in Don L. Lee's "He was real cool!" The student's whole bodily stance will differ from one to another of these phrases, if he "has them in him."

Sometimes a reading will lack sufficient energy—it will not fill the poem adequately, perhaps, or it will not fill the performing space. It is sometimes helpful for the teacher to remind students that the classroom in which they are reading is the space within which the poem must live. He may want them to walk about in a room, simply examine the length and breadth of it, and then have them read again. If energy is still lacking, he can ask them, "What did you say?" "I didn't understand that. What did you say?" "I still don't know what you mean. Try it again." Often the extra energy which such prompting calls forth will give the reading point and clarity. Of course the teacher must be careful not to exasperate!

I have sometimes, when this didn't work, asked a student to go to the opposite side of a room from where I was standing, turn his back, and (without facing me) try to read directly to me. It is important, when he does this, that the student know exactly where the teacher is standing; he may have to turn around and check, if he is unsure. Some students have said that they can feel the extra energy required to "read through their backs" in their necks, in their ears, in the back of their heads—but the point is simply that if they *really* are reading to the teacher, he can tell it. If they don't seem to be, the teacher should keep working sympathetically with them: "Are you really reading *right to me*?" "I think you've lost me now. Keep reading right to me!" The change in energy is often dramatically clear. But of course *any* method may fail with a given student. The teacher must be a little pragmatic. And sympathetic!

The class may begin with something as simple—on the face of it—as a *haiku:*

The Necklace*

Daigaku Horiguchi

I wish I could
put a string
through my tears
and make a necklace
for you.**

A student should first read it without breaks between the lines, simply as a prose sentence, then with a pause or slight "hold" at the end of each line. What difference does he feel in the tensions produced? How does he feel about the statement? What is causing the tears? To whom is the statement made? (These are not easy questions to answer, and no *one* answer is the "right" one. The student will perhaps enjoy the freedom of making choices.) How heavy a string is the speaker imagining? Can one sense the difficulty of putting a string through tears? What would happen? What would the necklace look like? Why should tears be offered as a gift? How does the speaker feel about the person to whom the gift is offered? The student should try reading the poem again with his answers to these questions in mind and with the body of the speaker now present. He should dwell a little on the three key words–*string, tears, necklace*–perhaps dwelling longest on the longest word, *necklace.* Isn't there something gentle about the offer? There is something very delicate about a necklace of tears.

These questions may sound sophomoric, the answers obvious. But once one begins working with oral readings, one finds that such matters are crucial to the student's body experience of the poem. It is amazing how often in the more conventional discussion situation the student never really *gets* to such absorption into his own body. And yet that kind of total impact is what the poem and the poet clearly want. Until the student has such experiences with poems, he has not really made an acquaintance with literature, however much he may have been talking about it.

We are not talking, now, simply about sensory awareness. We are not talking simply about making students aware of their emotionality. We are talking about felt response to poems–to any literary text. Without sensory awareness, there can be no such response; but we are talking about directed use of such awareness, not of the awareness in and of itself. I don't see poetry as a channel to sensory awareness, though it may be used so; for the teacher of literature, it

*"The Necklace" by Daigaku Horiguchi from *An Anthology of Modern Japanese Poetry*, edited and translated by Ichiro Kono and Rikutaro Fukuda, published by Kenkyusha Ltd., Tokyo, 1957. Reprinted by permission of Kenkyusha Ltd., Publishers.

**The translation does not, of course, keep the syllabic arrangement of the original.

seems to me to be the other way around. We create sensory awareness so that students can be responsive to poems, because poetry has value.

Reading a Play

Perhaps it will be worthwhile to examine a short scene from a play. Let's take a scene from *Macbeth*, a play much used in teaching Shakespeare:

Macbeth, III. 2*

Enter Lady Macbeth *and a* Servant.

Lady M. Is Banquo gone from court?
Serv. Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.
Lady M. Say to the King, I would attend his
leisure
For a few words.
Serv. Madam, I will. [*Exit.*]
Lady M. Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.
[*Enter* Macbeth.]
How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have
died
With them they think on? Things without all
remedy
Should be without regard; what's done is done.
Macb. We have [scotch'd] the snake, not kill'd it;
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds
suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams

*From *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Neilson and Hill, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1942.

That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.

Lady M. Come on,
Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

Macb. So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you.
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;
Present him eminence both with eye and tongue.
Unsafe the while that we
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
Disguising what they are.

Lady M. You must leave this.

Macb. Oh, full of scorpions in my mind, dear wife!
Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives.

Lady M. But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

Macb. There's comfort yet; they are assailable.
Then be thou jocund; ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

Lady M. What's to be done?

Macb. Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest
chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the
crow
Makes wing to th' rooky wood;
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
So, prithee, go with me. [*Exeunt.*]

There are fascinating questions here for the teacher as well as for the student, of course! Some answers must be found before any oral reading of the scene can profitably begin. A cold reading of such a scene in class, without some prior activity among students and between teacher and students will, for most of the students in the class, be a deadly experience.

Notice that lady Macbeth now has to ask Macbeth to come speak with her, whereas earlier he consulted her. On his own, he has decided to kill Banquo; he already has begun to move from her. Notice that she asks about Banquo. Does she suspect what Macbeth has in mind? What difference will it make in her manner if she does? Remember that in the scene just preceding this, Macbeth has in effect *dismissed* Lady Macbeth before he speaks with the two murderers (III. i. 40-43). This hasn't been usual with him in the play.

When the servant leaves, Lady Macbeth indicates her uneasiness—her dis-ease. What bodily state will best express her feelings? Does she pace up and down? Stand in one spot? Is she excitable? Deadened? She certainly feels the weight of her past actions upon her.

What change comes over her with the entrance of Macbeth? How does her "Things without all remedy/Should be without regard; what's done is done" square with her speech while alone? How does the contradiction show itself in her physical state?

What change takes place in Macbeth after the third line of his answer to Lady Macbeth? What does the word *But* involve here? Is Macbeth saying that he will not endure his affliction? If so, how will he escape it? Notice the contrast between "restless ecstasy" (and suggest that students look into that word *ecstasy*) and "sleeps well." As Macbeth shifts from thoughts of his own condition to the dead Duncan, what bodily changes may suggest the shift?

Then notice that as Lady Macbeth tries to cheer him, he shifts tone again: "So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you." And he turns to advice about Banquo.

Now notice the marked change again in Lady Macbeth. Once she had said to her husband, "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it." *Now*, when he says to her, "we/Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,/And make our faces vizards to our hearts,/Disguising what they are," she cries out, "You must leave this." Why has she altered her position?

One of the most fascinating lines in the play, in terms of motivation, is Lady Macbeth's reply to her husband's "Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives"—she says, "But in them nature's copy's not eterne." Some critics have taken this to be a suggestion to her husband to eliminate Banquo and Fleance, and perhaps that is right, but it doesn't square well with her earlier apprehension. And when Macbeth continues by saying that "they are assailable," she seems scarcely to take comfort in that. It is quite possible (I have heard it done brilliantly by an actress) for Lady Macbeth to sense what Macbeth has in mind, but to sense it with horror, so that when she says, "But in them nature's copy's not eterne," she says it partly in disbelief, partly in terror, partly in

awareness that that is exactly what Macbeth has in mind—murder, *again.* In that case, her "What's to be done?" is a cry, a question far larger than the immediate matter at hand. What can *ever* be done, after the murder of Duncan, to put things right again? Looked at in this way, Macbeth's final speech in the scene is all the more horrifying. After the affectionate line to her—"dearest chuck"—he embarks on his dark course—"Come, seeling night"—with the most perverse and appalling energy. Small wonder that she has no reply! In the performance to which I have already referred, the actress playing Lady Macbeth (Joan Potter) could not have put into words her sense of dismay, but that strange bodily quality almost of hallucination (as of the way lost forever) spoke vividly what she felt.

What we are engaged in, discussing the play this way with students, is really a rehearsal process. One might have the students go through these changes in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth silently, without the words but indicating in their behavior the feelings to which the words give direction. It is a matter, finally, of coupling feelings and words so closely that the feeling seems to be *in* the words. At this first rehearsal point, one will need to go over lines several times to talk about different qualities resulting from different pitch levels, inflection patterns, degrees of volume, posture, gestures, movements. Ultimately it is possible to convey the feelings very successfully without any *broad* movement—to perform with a book and a reading stand, or even seated. But the memory of all that has been done in the rehearsal process is vividly important. The point to be made *always* with Shakespeare, since students are prepared not to believe it often, is that the words and the feelings are those of people, and that something other than "language" is at work between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Looked at this way, one may say that a student's perspective on literature through the medium of oral performance is creative and sympathetic rather than simply critical and objective. One feels *with* the people in the play. As Macbeth, one must feel as Macbeth feels—and not, as a critic might, stand back to judge him. This is not, of course, to suggest that the student ought actually to do everything Macbeth does! He never loses objectivity to that degree. It is clear that reading literature this way takes a great deal of time. The class in interpretation can never be a survey course—nor can it be a very large class, since working individually with students is time-consuming. But with this approach, one certainly can make literature a meaningful part of the body's participation in life experience. *Much* is to be said for it.

We have said nothing at all, you notice, about reading verse. That matter is a very important one, in the long run, but the primary problems are those of the people and what is happening. These are what the language must ultimately express. The kinds of questions we have asked earlier, in talking about the poem by John Donne, ultimately should be asked here, too. Notice the bulking up of sounds in such a line as "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well," with the five *f*'s, the four *l*'s (counting as one, of course, the *l*'s in *well,* since to the ear there is

only one), the repeated *er*, the triple *e* (*fever he sleeps*). Shakespeare helps one to "taste" the significance of the line. Or notice the hard *k* sound in *scotch'd,** *snake, killed,* which permit Macbeth's statement to have great energy. Ask students whether they can feel the difficulty in enunciating "scotch'd the," pronouncing the final *d* in the verb, or the difficult juncture in "snake, not killed" if they give full value to the *k* in *snake* and the *t* in *not.* Contrast with these the flowing vowels in Lady Macbeth's comforting "Come on,/Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;/Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night." But these refinements must come *after* the sense of the scene has been established. First things first!

Reading a Story

There is time for only a small portion of a story here. Suppose we take the first four paragraphs of "The Pearls," one of the stories in Isak Dinesen's *Winter's Tales***:

From "The Pearls"

About eighty years ago a young officer in the guards, the youngest son of an old country family, married, in Copenhagen, the daughter of a rich wool merchant whose father had been a peddler and had come to town from Jutland. In those days such a marriage was an unusual thing. There was much talk of it, and a song was made about it, and sung in the streets.

The bride was twenty years old, and a beauty, a big girl with black hair and a high colour, and a distinction about her as if she were made from whole timber. She had two old unmarried aunts, sisters of her grandfather the peddler, whom the growing fortune of the family had stopped short in a career of hard work and thrift, and made to sit in state in a parlour. When the elder of them first heard rumours of her niece's engagement she went and paid her a visit, and in the course of the conversation told her a story.

*The Folio reads *scorched*–i.e., slashed, cut. The emendation *scotch'd* found in modern texts is Theobald's.

**Isak Dinesen, *Winter's Tales*, copyright © 1942 by Random House, Inc. Quoted by permission of Random House, Inc.

"When I was a child, my dear," she said, "young Baron Rosenkrantz became engaged to a wealthy goldsmith's daughter. Have you heard such a thing? Your great-grandmother knew her. The bridegroom had a twin sister, who was a lady at Court. She drove to the goldsmith's house to see the bride. When she had left again, the girl said to her lover: 'Your sister laughed at my frock, and because, when she spoke French, I could not answer. She has a hard heart, I saw it. If we are to be happy you must never see her again, I could not bear it.' The young man, to comfort her, promised that he would never see his sister again. Soon afterwards, on a Sunday, he took the girl to dine with his mother. As he drove her home she said to him: 'Your mother had tears in her eyes, when she looked at me. She has hoped for another wife for you. If you love me, you must break with your mother.' Again the enamoured young man promised to do as she wished, although it cost him much, for his mother was a widow, and he was her only son. The same week he sent his valet with a bouquet to his bride. Next day she said to him: 'I cannot stand the mien your valet has when he looks at me. You must send him away at the first of the month.' Mademoiselle,' said Baron Rosenkrantz, 'I cannot have a wife who lets herself be affected by my valet's mien. Here is your ring. Farewell forever.' "

While the old woman spoke she kept her little glittering eyes upon her niece's face. She had an energetic nature and had long ago made up her mind to live for others, and she had established herself as the conscience of the family. But in reality she was, with no hopes or fears of her own, a vigorous old moral parasite on the whole clan, and particularly on the younger members of it. Jensine, the bride, was a full-blooded young person and a gratifying object to a parasite. Moreover, the young and the old maid had many qualities in common. Now the girl went on pouring out coffee with a quiet face, but behind it she was furious, and said to herself: "Aunt Maren shall be paid back for this." All the same, as was often the case, the aunt's admonition went deep into her, and she pondered it in her heart.

In the story, as distinct from the poem or play we have examined, there is a narrator. In the two opening paragraphs, the narrator is objective, more or less matter-of-fact, neutral Only in a phrase like "as if she were made from whole timber" is there any particular hint of the nature of the reporting mind. There is no suggestion as to whether the narrator is male or female. (The fact that the story is by Isak Dinesen may suggest to one that the narrator is female, but this is not a necessary conclusion. We shall not be concerned, here, with evidence drawn from later in the story, though of course in a classroom situation one would wish students to read the *whole* of the text.) But it is important that the

opening narration not be underestimated. As a kind of speaking camera, at this point, the narrator is a vital factor in the story and must be given just as much attention as any of the characters. Indeed, the failure of many performances of fiction is that the narrator is slighted. This narration should be relaxed, direct, not hurried. As we move from paragraph one to paragraph two, the effect is that of the camera's moving in to look more closely at one of the characters. There is a certain good-humored robustness of tone in "a big girl with black hair and a high colour, and a distinction about her as if she were made from whole timber." (How would the bodily state of the narrator differ if he or she were talking about "a little girl with blond hair and a pale, nervous manner"?)

When we turn to the aunts, notice what we learn about them. Brought up at first to work hard and to save, they are suddenly asked to sit in dignity in the parlor. How might the fact that they are unused to sitting in parlors affect their feelings and behavior as they sit there? Remember that it is such a character as this—old, unmarried, probably showing signs of her early working self—who tells the story in paragraph three. We move from narration to the kinds of problems discussed in characterizing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In addition, we have characterization within characterization, since the old maid gives us dialogue between the young girl and the young man whom she expects to marry. How does the old maid's character affect the way she characterizes the others? What are the possibilities? Some clues are given in the fourth paragraph—she kept her eyes upon her niece, she had an energetic nature, she saw herself as the family's conscience, and, above all, she was a "vigorous old moral parasite on the whole clan," without hopes or fears of her own. We are back to the narrator in this paragraph, of course, and now we have a narrator who makes judgments. There is a clue in "Moreover, the young and the old maid had many qualities in common," which doesn't mean much yet—which startles us at this point, as a matter of fact—but which we hold in our minds as the truth emerges later. Again we move from narrator to character as the young girl, pouring out coffee, speaks to herself. That inner dialogue has in it fury, which the reader must give us in performance. At the same time, the girl is affected by the aunt's words, and "pondered it in her heart." That last sentence is very different in the state of its tensions from the sentence which precedes it.

It is this movement from narrator to character which is the chief fascination in the performance of prose fiction, perhaps. To what extent is the character tied to the nature of the narrator? To what extent is the character as free as a character in a play? The old aunt, in telling her anecdote, is probably quite free from the narrator (though the narrator is, of course, reporting the whole thing to us), but the two young people in the aunt's anecdote are probably *not* free from the aunt. Why? Often the degree of freedom is not absolutely determined in the story, and different performances will be interestingly different from one another in this very respect. But is it absolutely fatal to performance to treat the narration as relatively unimportant and to

devote all one's attention to dialogue. The narrator establishes the dominant perspective.

It goes without saying that sentence structures, prose rhythm, and figures are as important as in the poem and the play we have examined. The formality of the style in the Dinesen story runs, generally, throughout the stories in the whole collection–another reason why it is natural enough to think of the author herself as the narrator, though again it must be said that that is not a fixed matter. The rather involved syntax of the opening sentence is one of the things which suggests a reportorial narrator, more or less objective. It is also one reason why the sentence must not be rushed if the audience is to take in what is being said. It is the pattern of stresses and accents, combined with the nature of word-junctures, pauses determined by either rhetorical emphasis or punctuation, differences in phrase and sentence lengths, and ranges in energy and tempo related to scene and character which give prose its particular kinds of rhythm. It is looser than verse, but at the same time more complicated in some ways. It cannot be ignored.

Each story, each poem, each play provides new problems. But in interpretation, these should always be related to the body of the performer–the body which includes, of course, the mind! Everything must be ingested. Everything must be matched. For the teacher of interpretation, there are thus two bodies which are the concern of the class–the body of the text and the body of the performer. Or perhaps three–the body of the text, the body of the performer, and the body of the percipient in the audience. That audience, of which the teacher is one, will help the performer to know to what extent his match has been meaningful to others, and their comments (if they are sympathetic, constructive, *specific*) will help him to a better match. The extent to which the audience is sympathetic, constructive, and specific often depends, in large part, upon the teacher.

Conclusion

Not everything can be done in an English classroom. Not everything can be done in the classroom in interpretation. The *performance* of literature, as a way of studying and of experiencing literature, demands attention in its own right, and surely there is room in the secondary school curriculum for at least one whole course devoted to the relationship between the body of the text and the body of the reader. But beyond that, there is surely room, also, for joint effort by teachers of interpretation and teachers of English to lead students to the

sustaining life of literature. Their interests are mutual; they must be shared. The day is long past when interpretation as a part of speech should be thought of as a contest event, or simply as a talent. Interpretation is process, becoming; it is a form of cognition; it is a means of making literature and life speak, for the moment, as one.

Footnotes

1. The official name of the conference was the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English at Dartmouth College. It has had widespread discussion since 1966 and has resulted in the publication of books and articles devoted to improving classroom teaching of English.

2. See Wallace A. Bacon, *The Art of Interpretation*, Second Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 6, where the word *study* replaces the word *experience* given here.

3. This description of *act* is taken from Susanne Langer, *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, Volume I (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), where it is related (p. 421) to another aspect of life forms which is embodied in the remainder of my paragraph.

4. *Poem* is used here generically to mean any work of imaginative literature, not simply poetry.

5. The report of the conference has been published as *Oral Interpretation and the Teaching of English*, edited by Thomas L. Fernandez, a publication of the Illinois State-Wide Curriculum Study Center in the Preparation of Secondary School English Teachers (ISCPET) (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969.)

6. See Fernandez, ibid., pp. 71-76.

7. Ibid., p. vii.

8. Donna K. Townsend, "Oral Interpretation of Literature: A Theoretical and Practical Approach to the Study of Literature in Secondary School English," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1971, p. 80.

9. Ibid., p. 40.

10. Ibid., p. 91.

11. Ibid., p. 92.

12. George Hillocks, Jr., *Alternatives in English: A Critical Appraisal of Elective Programs* (Urbana, Ill.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English, 1972), p. 1.

13. Ibid., p. 49.

14. Ibid., p. 33.

15. Ibid., pp. 53-54.

16. Gomringer's complete *Constellations*, 1951-1968, were published in 1969 by the Rowohlt Verlag Reinbek Bei in Hamburg, Germany.

17. Barbara Hernnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 16.

18. Ibid., p. 17.

19. Ibid.

20. For a discussion of these terms with respect to performance, see Alethea Mattingly and Wilma Grimes, *Interpretation: Writer–Reader–Audience*, Second Edition (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1970), pp. 18-21; for a related discussion, see Bacon, op. cit., pp. 66-71.

21. J. N. Hook, *The Teaching of High School English*, Fourth Edition (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1972).

22. Ibid., p. 145.

23. Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938), p. 3. Cited in Hook, op. cit., p. 175.

24. Hook, op. cit., p. 225.

25. Hook is well aware of methods which tie in to the results of the Dartmouth Conference. He cites the Edward Wingler doctoral dissertation, "The Attitudes and Beliefs of English Educators: Three Perspectives" (University of Illinois, 1970), which made clear that there is strong support for the notion that "dramatic enactment (through improvisation, role-playing, etc.) is a valuable way of developing control of a wide range of language behaviors" (p. 182). He also quotes from Walker Gibson's "The Speaking Voice and the Teaching of Composition" (*English Leaflet*, Winter 1963) the statement, "The trouble with the written word is that it comes to us without kinesics–no voicebox, no eyebrows."

26. George D. Spache, *Toward Better Reading* (Champaign, Ill.: Garrard Publishing Company, 1963).

27. Ibid., p. 83.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 84.

30. Bacon, op. cit., p. 102.

31. Interestingly, Spache cites authorities who are against oral reading at sight and against requiring audiences to read the same selection silently with the oral reader (op. cit., p. 199). Most teachers of interpretation would whole-heartedly agree with such authorities.

32. See Arthur Wise, "Speech Education," in *The Practice of English Teaching*, edited by Graham Owens and Michael Marland (Glasgow and London: Blackie, 1970), pp. 15-21. This citation is from p. 16.

33. Ibid.

34. One of the few treatments of interpretation in English texts, according to Donna Townsend, is to be found in Geraldine Murphy's *The Study of Literature in High School* (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1968). Murphy is clearly sympathetic to oral performance, though she seems a bit apprehensive about "theatrical" as opposed to "expressive" oral readings. Townsend concludes that "the use she suggests of oral reading of literature is as an aid, albeit a very useful one, to literary study; and further, it is recommended as an aid for the teacher and not as a process by which students may engage in a study of a poem or a story." See Townsend, op. cit., pp. 64-66.

35. Townsend, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

36. Don Geiger, *The Dramatic Impulse in Modern Poetics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967).

37. Smith, op. cit., pp. 14-20.

38. Townsend, op. cit., pp. 122-196.

39. For a discussion of a one-act play by Giraudoux, see Bacon, op. cit., pp. 354-359.

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Note: The *Bibliographic Annual*, published by SCA, carries a yearly bibliography of studies in interpretation, beginning in 1973. The Interpretation Division of SCA has for several years provided its members with annual bibliographies of Readers Theatre and materials in non-speech journals. Howard D. Doll and Paul D. Brandes edit an annual bibliography of interpretation studies beginning with 1969, published in the North Carolina *Journal of Speech and Drama.* Several of the books listed above have extensive bibliographies of interpretation and related areas. The Aggertt and Bowen lists are very useful; the Campbell book has a wide-reaching bibliography; the Bacon and Breen volume has a useful list which needs updating. The general difficulty in establishing a bibliography for interpretation is, of course, that the subject reaches broadly into a great variety of related disciplines. A bibliography of basic books for the subject has recently been drawn up by the Interpretation Division of SCA, but it is limited to fifty titles currently in print.